

MELVIL DEWEY

BY

FREMONT RIDER

CHICAGO 1944

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

TO

DEIRDRE

PREFACE

It is not easy to write a biography of Melvil Dewey For one thing he was a genius And whether we like to admit it or not geniuses cannot in fairness be judged by the standards we apply to ordinary foll It is not easy because we are as yet too close to him to gain ade quate perspective The lives of most librarians present no problems of interpretation Most of them lead rela tively placid existences Few spread themselves far out side their chosen field and like the happy nation their annals may be brief But Dewey was different In his day he was often called a dynamo of energy today it would be more apt to liken him to a fifty ton tank riding roughshod over all sorts of obstacles toward its chosen objective When tanks move things get broken and peo ple get hurt And so although Dewey s friends and admirers were legion and fervently devoted he made many enemies during the course of his eighty years of fighting—and he was always fighting for something

Happily for the writer it did not seem within the province of such a little book as this to attempt to sit in judgment or to apportion blame This is no defini tive biography But it is I hope an interpretative one

Because I count myself fortunate to have worked for nearly two years in close daily association with Dewey, and because it also happens that I married Mrs Dewey's niece, I had an acquaintance with his family and friends that went beyond professional association Intimacy did not shrink Dewey's stature One might realize his weaknesses and still see the sincerity of his idealism and appreciate more than ever the magnitude of his work He remains the greatest man with whom I ever came into long-continued personal contact Except for him I would never have entered the library profession Except for him there would have been no library profession (in the form that we now know it) for me to enter!

Such facts as are herein cited are, it is hoped, correct For the comments, or deductions, or estimations—call them what you will—hung on these facts, I alone am responsible Their only excuse is that they may give, to those of a new library generation who never knew Dewey personally, a rounder and juster—and perhaps a more humanized—picture of the man This is the harder to do in a few pages, not merely because his interests were so many and varied, but also because he was personally so paradoxical

In quoting from Dewey's letters and writings the exotic spelling and "breves" of the original are in a few cases retained to give the reader something of the characteristic Dewey-esque flavor Generally, however, in order not to divert attention from content to form, they have been translated into our conventional spelling

It would be impossible to write any life of Melvil Dewey without giving credit to the comprehensive bio graphic compilation issued by the family in 1932 Melvil Dewey Seer Inspirer Doer by Grosvenor Dawe To it I am indebted for such basic facts as dates and names To my wife—who was for four years at the Lake Placid Club, and who lived with the Dewey family for a while at Albany—I am indebted for much personal information and for searching criticism James I Wyer and Frank K Walter particularly both long personally associated with Mr Dewey and with the New York State Library School gave me invaluable advice To Miss Bertha E Blakely librarian emeritus of the Mount Holyoke College library who read my manuscript to Miss Flora Belle Ludington present librarian of Mount Holyoke to R W G Vail present librarian of the New York State Library and to Joseph Gavit associate librarian who lent me copies of early Dewey memora bilia to Professor Alexander Cowie of our own Wes leyan faculty who was good enough to give me the reactions of a nonlibrarian reader and to numerous others who gave reminiscences information and advice I desire to express my very sincere appreciation It is my hope that I may have shown why every librarian is—and forever will be—unescapably indebted to Melvil Dewey

TREMONT RIDER

Wesleyan University
January 1944

"M D" OF THE "D C"

Some men can throw across a thwarting stream
A web of steel for humbler feet to tread
Some men can play Some men hear words unsaid
Some men, through points whirled in a cunning scheme,
Can light a city, or direct a beam
Of thought through infinite space What some have read
Can teach one how to better earn his bread,
One how to kindle an ennobling dream
Some men can certain living lines rehearse—
And then make terrors live that shake the soul
Some men, at even, when our world is still,
Can watch the birth-throes of a universe
Some men can peer into a crystal bowl
And dictate life or death there at their will

Some men can take a patient mass of clay
And mold it into beauty Some can weave
A gossamer of moonbeams Some deceive
The eye with flowers that will ne'er decay
Because their brush has made them One rare day
Some poet sings a spell of magic words
Pouring a rapture that outlilts the birds
Some men can solace hearts too sore to pray
But what of him who grasps what all men do
And blends it into order? How of right
Give praise to him who knows the final norm
Of all mankind's endeavor? Who sees true
In all disorder's darkness one clear light
And gives man's chaos of thought a reasoned form?[1]

—Fremont Rider

[1] *This double sonnet was sent Mr Dewey as a contribution to his eightieth birthday volume*

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MELVIL DEWEY

I

BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

MELVILLE LOUIS KOSSUTH DEWEY (he successively dropped first the Louis then the Kossuth then the le of Melville —and finally for a while tried to shorten the Dewey to Dui) was born December 10 1851 at Adams Center, New York, the youngest child of Joel Dewey and Eliza Green Both parents were of typical pioneer stock sturdy and thrifty and religious to the point of austerity]Melvil s maternal grandmother when she was only seventeen walked two hundred miles into what was then the wilderness of northern New York carrying one of her children in her arms and leading another

The Dewey family is supposedly of Welsh origin Both Melvil Dewey and Admiral George Dewey traced their ancestry to the common forebear of nearly all American Deweys Thomas Dewey who settled in Massachusetts in 1630 Melvil Dewey s immediate ancestors were undistinguished the plain honest hard working folk who have been the backbone of the nation—as they are the backbone of all nations Mostly they were farmers but when occasion demanded they became soldiers In fact Joel Dewey rose to the colonelcy of a New York regiment

Melvil's father was a man of some property and with a variety of business interests He owned several small farms, conducted a general store, and made boots and shoes Melvil himself states proudly in his diary that, when a boy, he learned enough of the latter trade to make himself a pair of boots, "doing every bit of the work, from crimping to the final finish"—all by hand, of course Unfortunately, Joel Dewey was not callous enough to be thoroughly successful as a business man, like Abraham Lincoln, he could never refuse a customer credit, and his store collected more unpaid promissory notes than cash Of the notes Melvil wrote later, when he sold the store, "There were 155 of them in father's long leather roll, 133 were outlawed, and I doubt if he ever collected the other 22"

From the time he was fifteen, through college days, young Dewey kept a more or less consecutive diary—complete enough to furnish an intimate and revealing picture of a lad who was, to an unusual degree, the father of the man That he worked, and worked hard, is clearly shown by entries in his diary "went off through the swamp and sugared off", "to work in the garden this morning, and this afternoon setting up a leach and helping mother clean house", "working the road", "dug postholes", "washed windows", "cleaned sewing machine", "spread ashes on the meadow", "drew gravel to the cemetery", "split and piled wood all day", "drawing goods from the depot"

But his days weren't all work There was recreation,

too of the entirely inexpensive homely country sort went to North Branch and caught a mess of suckers the sleighing is good we amused ourselves playing chess played ball went a-ducking this morning down to Moulton s pond and had a host of sport went to singing school

Recreation though was intermittent What formed the steady refrain of Melvil s diary all through his youthful years were *study* and reading working and studying at the house today and this evening (even though outdoors the song birds are holding a festival I think!) at school then at store studying reading Macaulay s *History of England*—I like it very much I staid with Wayne last night reading poetry

When Melvil was about twelve having saved up ten dollars by long hours of errand running and odd jobs he walked eleven miles to Watertown to buy a great and long yearned for treasure—a Webster s unabridged dictionary. (The book was so heavy that much to his distress he had to spend some of his precious money to enable him to get it home) Sixty years later the memory of this epochal event in his life was still fresh and he made this comment upon it At last I had the most essential book It wasn t his only book however for he records in 1869 the proud possession of eighty five of them

Very early he showed not only intellectual ability but the particular bent of it Mrs Eva A Bates of Watertown New York says this about the little private school

which her mother, Melvil Dewey's "Aunt Cind," conducted for primary pupils.

Cousin Melvil was one of her pupils, and she used to relate how he could work a problem in arithmetic in his head quicker than the others could on paper He was like lightning in his calculations Another characteristic was his mania for system and classification It was his delight to arrange his mother's pantry, systematizing and classifying its contents

On his fifteenth birthday, December 10, 1866, his diary records this characteristic self-appraisal

I have been weighing and measuring myself this afternoon and find that I weigh one hundred twenty-five pounds and am five feet and five and a fourth inches in height In looking over my small stock of worldly goods I find that I have fifty dollars' worth of clothing, fifty dollars' worth of books, and twenty-five dollars' worth of miscellaneous traps

And for ten years, on successive birthdays, we find him making a similar statistical record of physical and financial growth

In this same fifteenth year the lad who was later to become the executive head of the educational system of the greatest state in the Union, wrote in his diary "I attended a Teacher's Examination today I had no idea of teaching, but entered the class to learn what I could".
Despite this lack of clear intent, it appeared, two years later, that he had somehow imbibed a sufficient educational background to win for himself a third-grade teach-

ing certificate and with it the job of teaching for a twelve week term the school at Toad Hollow The compensation was $1 50 a day (which wasn t at all bad beginning schoolteacher wages for those days) And evidently he made good as a teacher for the next year we find him moving on to a more important post Bernhard s Bay at double the salary

The account in his diary of the closing day of his Bernhard s Bay schoolteaching is so revealing of the personality of the gangling eighteen year-old youngster that it deserves quotation As a country schoolteacher he must have been very much *sui generis* it is evident that even at this early age he was pouring himself out seeking to inspire his young charges with something of that dynamic urge for knowledge that forced him on He wrote

We had a short general exercise comparing life to the rivers on the Rocky mountains which starting within a short distance of each other reach respectively the Arctic, Pacific and Atlantic oceans I then gave them a short account of myself my intentions and the circumstance which sent me to them

After urging them all to be chieftains and giving them my reasons we all kneeled and closed school with a heartfelt prayer I was unable to controll my feelings

I haven t been so much affected at parting before in all my short life One little girl Emma Cook kept near me when school was out and I saw she wanted to kiss me goodbye so I stooped down and kissed her This was what the rest were waiting for

Some of my boys 14 years of age came with tears rolling down their cheeks and kissed me and tho it seems

almost foolish, I returned their marks of affection from a full heart . . . . I suggested on Tuesday that I should like to have those who wished to do so, write me a letter to remember them by. They answered the next morning by giving me 42 and as I read them all over at home it makes me feel sad.

In view of the devotion with which he endeavored to inculcate a passion for learning in his little Bernhard's Bay charges, it is not surprising, despite its prescience, to find the following entry in his diary (dated November 15, 1869, when he was only seventeen years old):

I have now about fully decided to devote my life to education. I wish to inaugurate a higher education for the masses. The more I think of it the more I am convinced that our present system of educational institutions, especially the district and academic schools, are more than half failures. This should not be so. This shall not be so. If my life is spared and God permits, the people shall have this subject brought home to their conscience. I say "conscience" for I believe it to be a great sin for those who have controll of youth to allow or rather indirectly compell them to waste so much time in acquiring so little knowledge. . . . May the allwise Creator see fit to make me a willing instrument in his hands to advance this cause, the companion of religion.

Three days later he adds: "I am anxiously waiting for the day when I shall take my destined place, for it seems that destiny impels me to undertake this as a lifework. . . ."

On his following birthday there appears in his diary:

a paragraph that forecasts by implication his whole lifework and every one of those time saving educational reform movements that for sixty years he was to champion so ardently

Tomorrow I complete my eighteenth year and have accomplished during these eighteen years what I hope my children if I ever have any (and not only hope but expect) will accomplish better in fifteen or even less I started to write "twelve but stopped because I feared it might be extravagant As far as education or discipline and development of the mind are concerned I am very sure fourteen years might accomplish it all

Returned home again from Bernhard s Bay Melvil for a short while took over a quite different role Having for no reason except his insatiable intellectual curiosity studied bookkeeping, he tried to improve his father s store keeping methods I finally made a complete inventory he writes to get rid of the guesswork and my figures were conclusive that the store was a loss rather than a gain so I devoted my energy for months to persuading father that it ought to be sold In this effort the youngster was finally successful The store *was* sold and the family moved to Oneida New York This move gave him a chance to piece out what had really been largely self taught education by attendance at Oneida Seminary from there he went on to Alfred University for the definite purpose of preparing himself for college

Self taught? Perhaps But intellectual curiosity driven by burning zeal can carry one far What did he study?

What books did he read? His diary records "reviewing my mathematics", "reading Abercrombie's *Intellectual Philosophy*", his determination to read Caesar in the original, "though poorly prepared to do so", nights outdoors with his great boyhood friend, Charlie Phalen, "identifying the stars", visits to factories to learn about manufacturing processes at firsthand. "Be not afraid of hard study," he wrote in one of his first published utterances, "it is the price of learning."

But young Melvil was acquiring in these formative years more education than that which he got from books. He was learning thrift—and all his life it stayed with him. His father constantly preached "don't waste." His mother wrote to him many years later: "My children all work too hard. I am very much worried about you

I want you always to try to benefit the world, but you are working hard enough to command good wages."

When he was sixteen he wrote an essay on the evils of smoking, almost exhaustive in its scope. Characteristically, of all its evils, the financial waste of the habit seemed to young Melvil the worst. "You call a man a moderate smoker," he writes, "who uses but one cigar in twenty-four hours, but, followed up for fifty years, your moderate smoker has blown away in smoke what, with its interest, would have amounted to $14,794.50."

Whatever the reason for it, an almost fanatical hatred of smoking (and of drinking) stayed with Dewey all his life. "Certainly God never made an animal," he commented, "with a natural desire to convert his mouth into

a smokestack He made his father give up one of the most lucrative departments in his retail store He writes

I told him Yu hav no ryt to sel tobako & cigars in yur store as yu hav for so many years & I am going to clean out the whole store I went to the other store & told them if they wd take our stok off our hands at cost we wd never sel tobako agen & they cd hav the entyr bizi ness They did so & father didn t veto my hy handed proceeding so that put us morally ryt

But these were details The outstanding development of his adolescence was the decision arrived at long be fore he went to college that life deserved to be ap proached with high seriousness This decision was neither pose nor veneer it was an unquenchable belief innate in his character In his diary—obviously intended for no eyes but his own—he records lying in the dark on the calf skins in the rear of his father s store vaguely enjoying the pungent smell of the tanned leather and thinking the long thoughts of boyhood Only his thoughts were unusual ones for a lad of fifteen He had recently been caught up in the temperance movement then sweeping the country and had signed the pledge Many boys did that and when the momentary hysteria passed forgot all about it Dewey didn t He records that he went to Adams and bought some bone cuff buttons inscribed with an R Why R ? That was his very own secret The R stood for Reformer He sought a visible sign for he believed that he had def initely enlisted in his battle of life And he had

That is why, making every allowance for its obviously sophomoric quality, there is yet something prophetic about his last public "oration" at Alfred

Life—a very narrow isthmus between the boundless eternities of the past and future   If we have a work to do, and for what other purpose could we have been created, we must do it while the day lasts From every walk of the broad earth comes up an earnest cry for laborers   If life is so short and eternity so long, nothing but earnest, persistent endeavors will enable us to look back on a finished work

Three years before he had been valedictorian at the Adams Center high school Even then his topic had been an ultra-serious one, "Our Future" He had concluded with a prophetic phrase "From Adams Center there may go forth another Lincoln, a Clay, a Webster or a Washington who shall be an honor and an ornament to his native country " Of course the boy who went from Adams Center to Amherst was neither a Lincoln nor a Webster, but he did turn out to be, if to a much less degree, one of the "movers and shakers" of this world of ours

II

AT AMHERST

As WITH Deweys boyhood so with his life at Amherst College where he graduated in 1874 It appears to have been on the whole a pretty serious affair Being himself he worked hard at his studies The paucity of his financial resources required that he work equally hard to earn his college expenses A natural shyness would have made the usual social contacts of college life difficult for him in any event and before he entered Amherst his diary records this characteristic resolution I shall mingle in society very little during the next four years in term time almost none I shall take the course which I think will give me the most thoro culture and the greatest ability to do good Later he writes My social expenses are less than other boys because I keep clear of nearly all of them and am satisfied

College did nevertheless make some impression In a letter home a little later he writes I am quite a citizen of Amherst and enjoy it immensely Dont misunderstand me by any means that I accept all or half my invitations out for I have no time for party going only occasionally In his later life Dewey said that he had chosen Amherst as a college because of its pioneer

efforts to provide physical exercise for all its students If this indeed directed his choice, he seems to have availed himself little of the facilities it offered, for his sole exercise during his college days, and long thereafter, was horseback riding This followed the solitary pattern of so much else of his life In a letter, he says

I shall spend all this vacation in harder work than during the term I bragged, you will remember when in Ohio, that I should take life easier this year but I find myself crowded more than ever before I don't overwork I think, for my horse saves me I go out to her three times a day and feed and care for her in an affectionate, leisurely way and then I spend quite a little time in the saddle I go out nearly every morning except Sunday and am generally out from four, or half past, till six when I have tea This is twilight, too dark to work and too light for a lamp, so I use the time for my exercise. I ride some fifteen miles or twenty at once—sometimes only three or four I think it is all that keeps me up so well as I am for I am very well indeed this winter

Intimate friends he never made easily Even in his college days, when intimate friendships develop almost automatically, he made only one, Walter Stanley Biscoe, who became his lifelong aide and Achates (Charles Phalen, Dewey's friend from boyhood, died a year after his graduation) Nor did he interest himself in public affairs The country was at the time seething with the problems of reconstruction, but his diary's only reference to them was "Town meeting today, did not attend,

have no time for such things Nor so far as the record shows did he take any part in college functions and although he maintained in after years a reasonable interest in his classmates the conventional frivolities of class reunions had no appeal for him Indeed on one occasion he was characteristically and emphatically critical of the smoking at his class banquet

If his men friends in college were few his women friends appear to have been numerous This too was characteristic All through his life women were more congenial intimates to him than men he was more at ease with them he worked to more purpose with them he played with them with greater zest All through the entries of the Amherst years of his diary women s names —some girls some married women—are scattered thickly This for example is the sort of entry that recurs again and again Working in the library taught my class in tachigraphy corrected papers went to a party took Anna home then ran around and spent the rest of the evening with Mary E Frequently he would call on two or three different girls in a single evening These feminine acquaintanceships cost him only his time but to one with his extreme notions of the value of time this was a very serious cost indeed On the other hand although he bemoaned the time his feminine friends took he seemed unwilling to deny himself their society After all when one is twenty three one cannot be completely Spartan

What took the curse of priggishness from him was his

sincere unselfishness That enthusiastic willingness to give of himself to others that he had shown at Bernhard's Bay marked him all through college In fact, it brought him a rebuff—what was to be the first of many—from a constituted authority that felt itself either outraged or ignored The cause this time developed innocently enough Dewey, seeking always to save that precious time of his, had become interested in shorthand, and, entirely by himself, had become proficient in the use of Lindsley's tachygraphy As always, having discovered what seemed to him a good thing, he had wanted to spread the gospel of it and had proceeded to organize regular classes in tachygraphy among the students Indeed, such was his zeal and persuasiveness that he had signed up fifty-two students from the class of 1878 alone Such a wholesale and entirely unauthorized addition to the college's curriculum, however worthy its motive, was too much for the Amherst faculty to overlook They objected to his classes Eventually, this "compromise" was arrived at he was permitted to continue them, provided he did so without compensation If the faculty thought this proviso would quash the venture they did not know Dewey Not a whit deterred, he for months devoted four hours every day to gratuitous shorthand instruction to large groups of Amherst undergraduates

What else did he do at Amherst? First of all he did his college work—adequately, if not brilliantly He continued to read widely His fellow students thought him a bit queer but respected his ability and sincerity One



DEWEY AT AMHERST

of his professors John Bates Clark wrote Melvil Dewey as I knew him during his college course was full of enthusiasm for a number of good causes and fluent and convincing in advocating them But Dewey did much more than his conventional curricular work For one thing he worked in the library While working there and still an undergraduate he drafted that great scheme for book classification with which his name will be forever linked

He began to work in the college library during his junior year Just why or when his interest turned in this particular direction is not evident It was probably a gradual development beginning simply because it offered him a congenial method of earning his college expenses It began also without definite financial prearrangement for his monthly compensations as an undergraduate student assistant ran all the way from nothing to twenty five dollars After graduation when he was appointed assistant librarian his compensation was considerably increased but even then it seems to have been extremely irregular It did enable him however to repay a substantial portion of the advances that his father had made him for his college expenses

Despite his already quoted eighteenth birthday resolution it was not until near the close of his Amherst career that Dewey seems definitely to have decided to devote himself to educational work For a time he had seriously considered becoming a foreign missionary But after several discussions of this problem with Professor

Julius Seelye (later president of Amherst), on whose advice he leaned heavily, Melvil once more reached his first decision, and again he put it down in black and white The imaginative insight which its phrases show, and their revelation of Dewey's own philosophy of education, make them deserving of quotation in full In them, written while he was an undergraduate at Amherst, is planted the seed of Dewey's second great contribution to librarianship, the Library School

I thought I would like to teach mathematics, study, practice and teach architecture where one could build his ideas into permanent form, but I always realized that out of a score of things that had greatly attracted me, I could do only one with one life and so I determined that my highest usefulness would be not to do anyone of these things, but to stimulate others to take up the work I thought I might on an average each year induce one person to do some important work that he would not have done except for my influence Thus in fifty years I would really have accomplished fifty things instead of one by raising myself to the second power, seeking out and inspiring and guiding others to do the work for which my one life did not give time

So far as the record shows, the Amherst authorities were entirely satisfied with his services as librarian of the college, and he might have stayed on indefinitely in the post But he felt that for him larger fields of usefulness lay outside He was already deeply interested in metric reform and spelling reform His new Decimal Classification was developing apace He had, during his

apprentice librarianship been visiting other libraries—a dozen or more all over the country—and in person or by correspondence had become acquainted with scores of the country s leading librarians and educators He had developed new ideas in library practice in a dozen different directions and was eager to propagandize them

Making the break from Amherst however, was not easy On April 9 1876 he called on many college friends talked libraries with Professor Montague admitted that his emotions were too much for him and that he had several big cries That night he records in his diary It was to me a sad day So with an earnest prayer that God will do with me what seems to Him best I closed the book for it is written and no entry can be altered

III

BEGINNING A LIFEWORK

MELVIL DEWEY's move to Boston that spring day in 1876 was a momentous one, not only for him but for the whole library world The American Library Association, the first library organization, was just about to be born, with Dewey as its secretary and chief moving spirit, the *Library Journal,* the first library periodical, was about to appear for the first time, and with Dewey as its editor, the Dewey Decimal Classification, the first practicable library classification, hitherto solely an Amherst affair, was about to be spread abroad to the outside library world, the Library Bureau, initiator of all sorts of new library devices and equipment, was, under Dewey's leadership and impetus, about to be established and take its first fumbling steps

Into all of this crushing mass of detail connected with library development Dewey was starting to plunge himself that April morning And, as if these various library developments were not a sufficient burden, he insisted on spending a further portion of his time and strength on two other of the great interests of his life, metric reform and spelling reform "Within six months," he says, "I had organized three national educational soci-

eties utilizing the Centennial to hold three national conventions and thus start the work [1] Here is the masthead under which from 1876 to 1883—the years that may well be called his formative years—Dewey conducted his office in Boston

General Offices [illegible] No 32 [illegible] Street Boston.
Besides the [illegible] Co (commercial [illegible] labor saving devices for

The best reading for the [illegible] at the least [illegible]
[illegible] ON
[illegible] Dewey

J
[illegible] Dewey

The [illegible] of English Orthography
SPELLING REFORM ASSOCIATION
President, [illegible] LLD [illegible] College — Secretary [illegible] Dewey

Each society has Supply Department [illegible] low prices, [illegible] everything it recommends pertaining to the Library Metric [illegible] Spelling Reform movement [illegible] supported [illegible] by gifts and members' fees, the smallest sums are gratefully received.

That nearly all of these various interests were entirely unremunerative was a fact which he apparently never even considered As with all else in his life if he thought he could do a thing that needed to be done no other excuse for his taking it on seemed to be necessary Small wonder then that after a few months in Boston he was more deeply in debt than ever before in his life in fact he was at a loss as to where to turn even for the slender funds he needed for daily living Reformers today where they do not conduct an outright racket at least ever cock a weather eye toward their supporting finances Dewey plunged ahead trusting entirely to the ravens

[1] *The Chronicles of 74 Since Graduation from Amherst College* (Warren Mass 1885) p 16

But his Boston move was to turn out to be important for him in a much more personal way. Immediately after his arrival there his diary records: "Came in on the 7 40 and went at once out to Harvard University Library to see John Fiske and talk with him about the Classification etc He was greatly interested, as was Mr Sibley, the librarian They made me give a lecture, as they called it, to their first assistants, and to the librarian of Wellesley College, who chanced to be there." Two years later, on October 19, 1878, Annie Roberts Godfrey, the librarian of Wellesley College ("who chanced to be there") married him

Miss Godfrey, twenty-five when he first met her, had been appointed to the Wellesley post only the year before Born in Milford, Massachusetts, she had left Vassar in her junior year to share in the opening of the new Massachusetts college that had just been established by Mr Durant She had heard of Dewey's new Amherst classification She wanted to know more about it The chance meeting at Cambridge was followed up On July 7, 1876, Dewey wrote her "At last I am able to send you a proof of the library scheme I shall be glad to answer any questions that may arise and more glad to receive any corrections or criticisms that may occur to you" She was one of ten women to attend the Philadelphia conference, and all through 1876 and 1877 she and Melvil corresponded about their common library problems

In the latter year, she was one of the small group of

American librarians who went to England to help in the inauguration there of the new Library Association of the United Kingdom and in her letters home during this trip there are constant references to Mr Dewey but only as the life of the party (a phrase by the way which she actually uses) They evidently got well acquainted however—as people do on shipboard One paragraph from these letters is revealing both of him at that period and of herself

Mr Winsor was of course prepared as our representative but both Mr Poole of Chicago and Mr Dewey were called *on at half a minute s notice and made the* two best speeches of the evening it was said so we are naturally proud of our countrymen I have yet to see Mr Dewey in any position where he is not equal to the occasion Poor Mr Dewey is I fear almost used up and will get very little rest out of this trip It makes me thoroughly provoked to see how these eight or ten able bodied men let him do all the work make all the arrangements and keep all the accounts I think they might at least take a share but he is so good natured and willing that they just wait round and let him do the whole When we go to Paris I think we shall have a smaller party and hope he will get some relief

Although Melvil was a frequent visitor and correspondent after their return to the United States in November 1877 Annie hesitated for some time before permitting their relationship to become one of more than sympathetic comradeship Like him she took the responsibilities of life seriously She felt that he was

called upon to do a great work and asked herself, with true Victorian conscientiousness, whether she, as his wife, would be a help or a hindrance to him In one letter she wrote "If there be between man and woman, earnest in the work of life, a calm strong friendship, may it not be ours?" And in a birthday letter to him the same year, she wrote "I am glad that another year is added to your unselfish life, glad that it is a power for good, glad that you are my friend, that I may be yours . Your crowded busy life is one to be envied in comparison with mine, only you are doing very wrong to put on more steam than any human machine is warranted to run under."

There was the further difficulty that her family was not entirely happy in her proposed marriage to this penniless young enthusiast from the wilds of northern New York—this notwithstanding the fact that the Godfreys were themselves a family of idealists, putting first the doing of good in the world, and the making of money far, far down in their scale of relative values Despite all doubts, however, when the inevitable occurred (at Milford, Massachusetts, October 19, 1878), the well-wishers to the newly married pair were many and most cordial, for the Godfrey family was widely known and respected, and Melvil had already acquired a nationwide reputation as a young man both of ideas and of indefatigable industry

Annie Dewey need not have hesitated, she proved in many respects an ideal wife for him If ever a man did,

he needed a balance wheel and so far as any woman could supply him with one she did She sympathized with his aspirations gave him sound advice tried hard to look after his health and to shield him from petty annoyances She gave up most of her private life throw ing their house open freely to their fellow workers in many causes and to his library school students Real izing that he was working harder than any man should she tried even before their marriage in some degree to curb his irrepressible energy One of her letters written while she was still at Wellesley concludes with this playful but solicitous admonition

> I am going to haunt you Every night when the clock strikes ten I shall come to you in imagination put my hand on your forehead smooth your temples—a moment and whisper goodnight If you dare disobey you shall hear a little voice sing softly good night good night good night over and over again keeping time with the monotonous ticking of the clock You may think it s conscience but it s me

Immediately they were married her influence began to show itself She forced him to accept the hard truth—*particularly hard for one of his temperament to accept*—that even the most utterly right of ideas is not auto matically self-establishing All reform demands hard work work takes time and costs money both must be anticipated and provided for She helped him to extri cate himself from the financial tangle into which his unrestrained enthusiasms had gotten him Although

she chided him for overworking she caught from him some of his own bad habits Early in their married life they drew up "time budgets" for each other so as "never to waste a minute." They set up other rigid rules of self-discipline "to be more patient," "to think twice before speaking," "to rise early and eat slowly," "to dress with more care," "to behave with dignity," etc, etc They tried to improve each other's spelling and diction Surely life was a very real and earnest thing in the early days of the Dewey ménage Today—according to one's point of view—their conscientious efforts may have either a pathetic or a humorous aspect They saw neither

His decisions were always hers To her he was always right All her life this faith never wavered—even when, as was later to be the case, it was attacked at a particularly vulnerable point She had "causes" of her own, interests to which, as the years passed, she increasingly devoted herself, but always *his* work and cares came first If she saw things always through his eyes—well, perhaps that is what good wives are for!

IV

THE CONTRIBUTIONS—
THE DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION

To FEW MEN comes the opportunity to complete practically one s personal contribution to a great life work while still a college undergraduate not yet twenty two years old. That the Decimal Classification was one of Dewey s most important contributions to librarian ship hardly needs argument One needs only to try to visualize a library world that had never received its clarifying influence

It is evident from notes in Dewey s diary that the problem was one over which he had been puzzling for several years before he arrived at his solution for in his many library visits book classification was one of the first subjects he discussed In his comments for example on a visit to that library (New York State) that he was destined later to head he says They arrange the books alphabetically paying no attention to subjects But the actual solution of the problem finally came to him as an intuitive flash In an article in the *Library Journal*[1] he says

In visiting over fifty libraries I was astounded to find the lack of efficiency and waste of time and money

[1] Decimal Classification Beginnings *Library Journal* Feb 15 1920 p 152

in constant recataloging and reclassifying made necessary by the almost universally used fixt system where a book was numbered according to the particular room, tier and shelf where it chanced to stand on that day, insted of by the class, to which it belonged yesterday, today and forever . . .

For months I dreamd night and day that there must be somewhere a satisfactory solution. In the future were thousands of libraries, most of them in charge of those with little skil or training. The first essential of the solution must be the greatest possible simplicity. The proverb said "simple as a, b, c," but stil simpler than that was 1, 2, 3. After months of study, one Sunday during a long sermon by Pres. Stearns, while I lookt stedfastly at him without hearing a word, my mind absorbed in the vital problem, the solution flasht over me so that I jumpt in my seat and came very near shouting "Eureka!" It was to get absolute simplicity by using the simplest known symbols, the arabic numerals as decimals with the ordinary significance of nought, to number a classification of all human knowledge in print.

The basic idea came thus quickly, and was Dewey's. But its development was a long slow process, in which, from the first, many minds cooperated. The first printed edition, a slender pamphlet, bearing an Amherst imprint and the title, *A Classification and Subject Index for Cataloguing and Arranging the Books and Pamphlets of a Library,* did not appear until 1876. Dewey's eager mind had not, however, waited three years to make a trial of his new discovery. He saw chaos around him in the Amherst library and wanted to bring order into

it. To preach the classification gospel to the outside library world was a development that appeared much later

Back in the year of its birth on May 8 1873 Dewey presented to the Library Committee of Amherst a memorandum—a document still preserved in the Amherst archives—outlining his proposed new classification Too long to be reprinted in full this first presentation of the Decimal Classification summarizing his arguments for it does deserve extended quotation

Select the main classes not to exceed nine and represent each class by one of the (ten digits) nine significant figures Subdivide each of these main heads into not more than nine subordinate classes and represent each sub class by a digit in the first or ten s decimal place Sub-classify each or any of these eighty-one (hundred) classes into not more than nine subclasses and assign to each one of the digits in the second decimal place Thus the sub-classes may be increased in any part of the library without limit each additional decimal place increasing the minuteness of classification ten fold

Books of a general character embracing more than one topic or subject would remain in the general class e g A Dictionary of Science would receive no subclassification but remain simply with main class number

The cipher has its regular zero power i e indicates no classification e g o would be the class number of a general cyclopedia which covers all the nine classes

A somewhat extended personal examination of the various systems of classification in use by the large libraries of this country and such facts as were accessible concerning library economy abroad lead me to think

the proposed system better than any single one now in use for the following reasons

It allows of any and all changes in building, shelving, &c without any change whatever in the press marks as first catalogued Each book being located relatively to the other books according to its subject, and not according to a wooden shelf, it is clear that so long as the book is by the same author and on the same subject there is nothing to be changed in any removal or recataloguing

Books on the same subject are found all together (as far as it is possible to make close classification of books) and no growth of special subjects, or limitation of space, or changes of any kind every separate them This is of the greatest utility to the library staff and such persons as have access to the shelves since they find in one place all the resources of the library on the subject they came to investigate

The system is easily understood & applies equally well to a library of a hundred vols or of a million, it being capable of indefinite & accurate growth

This memorandum of its student library assistant convinced the Library Committee They gave his new classification their blessing, and he proceeded to re-classify the Amherst Library according to it As has already been said, from the first many minds cooperated in its development Young Dewey's fellow student and devoted friend, Walter Stanley Biscoe, did much of the work on the first amplification of the schedules, and several Amherst professors gave advice in the working out of the classifications of their respective fields That

the classification had the advantage of this three year tryout in the Amherst Library before it was crystallized into printed form was of course all to the good The basic concept of 1873 survived but meanwhile there was probably considerable change in schedule details

The preface to the first edition (1876) retains much of the phraseology that had been used in the memo of 1873 Today a good deal of it sounds pretty bromidic but that is simply because it is hard for us to realize—so profound has been the Dewey impress—how much that we now take for granted was to the librarians of 1876 the dawning of a new day

The history of the Decimal Classification since 1876 has been one of a book that has made its way through edition after edition has grown from forty two pages to nearly two thousand solely in answer to persistent professional demand without as its author once wrote "advertyzing or ajents By 1927 it was in use in 96 per cent of all public libraries of the United States in 89 per cent of college and university libraries and in many thousands of other libraries in every corner of the civilized world No other classification system has ever even remotely approached the general acceptance that Dewey s Decimal Classification has won for itself the majority of libraries not using Dewey are following a home made classification of their own

Here is the record of the successive editions

[2] American Library Association *A Survey of Libraries in the United States* v 4 p 7

Edition	Date	Editorial Assistant	Copies
1	1876	W S Biscoe	1,000
2	1885	"	500
3	1888	"	500
4	1891	May Seymour	1,000
5	1894	"	2,000
6	1899	"	7,600
7	1911	"	2,000
8	1913	"	2,000
9	1915	"	3,000
10	1919	"	4,000
11	1922	Dorkas Fellows	5,000
12	1927	"	9,340
13	1932	Fellows & Getchell	8,000
14	1942	Mazney & Getchell	10,000

Beside these regular editions, an *Outline* of the Decimal Classification was published in 1921, and an *Abridged Decimal Classification* in 1929

Although, over a period of seventy years, the growth of the Decimal Classification seems amazing, at first it spread slowly But this is easily understandable The reclassification of any library is not something to be entered into with *insouciance* No matter how good a new classification may appear to be, reclassification is tremendously expensive Wellesley, for example, did not introduce it until several years after Mrs Dewey's leaving there Columbia adopted it in 1883, and then probably only at the insistence of its new librarian Even in 1890 the Decimal Classification was spoken of as the "new" classification—one that had gained wide, but by no means the general, acceptance it was to receive later

Although actual adoption was gradual there was however from the start the most cordial appreciation of its merits At the centennial year meeting of librarians in Philadelphia—of which more later—their youthful secretary s new Classification was one of the chief topics of conversation The following condensed record of a portion of this meeting s proceedings is pertinent not only as a part of the history of the Classification but as evidence of Dewey s personal attitude toward his own work

Mr Smith (Lloyd P Smith) said he had carried away from the Convention of 1853 but one idea of special value—that of Mr Folsom s card catalogue

He felt that the most valuable idea which he should carry away from this Conference would be the system of cataloguing and classification devised by Mr Dewey Would Mr Dewey favor the Conference with a description of his method?

Mr Dewey While I acknowledge the compliment which has been paid to the Amherst method I must beg to be excused from presenting its claims before this meeting—not that I lack faith in its merits for the more we use it the more we are convinced of its great value but the prominent part which I have had in calling this Conference makes me unwilling to use any of its time for a matter in which I have so much personal interest

Those interested will find explanations in the Government Report and I shall gladly furnish any additional information at any time

Mr Capen (Edward Capen Librarian Public Library Haverhill Massachusetts) On several occasions since the opening of this Convention we have heard the plan

of our Secretary alluded to as one of great value, as the discovery of the age, in fact, in regard to library management But every attempt, thus far, to draw it from him has resulted in postponement . It now seems that we may adjourn without having our curiosity gratified For one, I must express myself in terms of great disappointment, and hope that our friend will suffer our many entreaties to prevail over his modesty"

Mr Dewey said he was willing to answer any questions or give any explanations that the Conference might require, and being again called upon, briefly described his method In answer to inquiries he further said

"We do not claim that our scheme solves all the difficulty of cataloguing and administering a library

"Our system won't make folios and sixteens fit the same shelf without undue waste of space, it won't secure a perfect regularity in the sequence of the different colored bindings at the same time that the books are minutely classed by subjects

"There is one objection to our system which does not apply to the common method of numbering shelves and books In the common system this book which we find to-day at the end of this shelf nearest this window, will (may) be found just there ten years from to-day, and, knowing its place, we might in this special case come in here and get the book in the dark "

Mr Smith ". The number of people who visit our libraries in the dark is not large enough to make this objection very formidable"

Mr Dewey "This was the only point on which we had any doubt in adopting our plan some three years ago After actual trial we found that the difficulties were mostly imaginary "

Mr Smith later commented "I am inclined to think

that the system of our brilliant and indefatigable Secre tary Mr Dewey is the one we shall all have to come to in the end

As Dewey had remarked the new Classification had been deemed important enough to be reprinted as a part of the great milestone the 1876 Report of the United States Bureau of Education on *The Public Libraries of the United States*

Charles A Cutter, whose *Expansive Classification* threatened for a while a little later to become a rival to the Decimal Classification wrote to Annie Godfrey on June 28 1876

Mr Dewey has explained his system to me and we have talked it over several times I have brought against it all the objections I could think of and he has answered nearly all I think it is plain that the defects of the system are defects that it shares with all other systems and that it has some merits which no other system has Of course it is possible that use may develop some incon veniences which I cannot foresee but those that I do see are balanced by greater conveniences If I could start a library I should use this system.

Later Cutter tried to join forces with Dewey and to gether the two friends actually worked out the outlines of a new classification on a 35-character base (the arabic numerals plus the alphabet omitting the O) It was never published however and Dewey returned to his faith in the outstanding simplicity of a purely numerical base

At no time did the Decimal Classification suffer from lack of adherents in fact there is more than half truth in the assertion that it has suffered from their excessive enthusiasm Numbers are fascinating things, and there have been, over the years, many would-be experts in classification who have not realized that, because a certain amount of classification is a good thing, an indefinitely larger amount of it is not necessarily better It should have been obvious that the more detailed a classification is made, the more quickly it tends to become obsolete, that the more complex it is made, the more its original easily grasped simplicity becomes lost But neither of these axioms was realized The result has been a succession of editions of the Classification padded out with minute, little used, and often poorly done, amplifications of isolated sections, ill-advised amplifications that have thrown the basic decimal scheme all out of focus And finally, we have had Dewey's original Classification capped by the ingenious, but not altogether practical, elaborations of the *Classification décimale*—a monument, if there ever was one, of patient but somewhat self-defeating erudition

It is difficult to overestimate what the widespread adoption of a uniform, efficient, easily understood, and unusually logical library classification meant to the library world during its developing period As the Classification gradually won general acceptance by the rank and file of libraries, its users found that they were receiving several sorts of surplus value The Decimal

Classification became a sort of international bibliographical language it made the teaching of classification in library schools a relatively simple problem it rendered easily possible all sorts of cooperative cataloging ventures In a very real sense it also developed library *esprit de corps* and professional solidarity during those formative years when they were most needed

Just what is the essential quality of the Decimal Classification that has made it so great a contribution to librarianship? To answer this question it is necessary to distinguish carefully between the underlying and the superficial to realize that the *Dewey* Decimal Classification despite its present very widespread use is in the long view a thing of evanescent value to see that it was Dewey s basic classificational concept and not the details of the schedules in which he embodied that concept persuasively ingenious and convincingly logical though these schedules were that was his great contribution

What is this basic and revolutionary concept? He implied it clearly in his memo to the Amherst faculty—*a progressively and indefinitely more minute classificational subordination expressed by means of decimally placed nomenclative characters* How revolutionary this concept was is the more apparent if we attach to decimally as we have just used the word an acquired meaning broader than its dictionary one making it inclusive of all numerical bases instead of merely the ten digit one Our *base* might perfectly well be duodecimal for example and the *basic* Dewey concept

would still hold The second classificational concept that Dewey emphasized, and one only a little less revolutionary than the first, was what he termed a "relative location," in contradistinction to the then almost universal "fixed location," as between book and shelf

"Fixed location" is, of course, not a "classification" at all, but simply a shorthand method of numbering stack-decks, ranges, shelves, etc Dewey's "relative-location" idea was perhaps not entirely new—although his descriptive phrase for it was (A search through the dusty bibliographical past might even dig up forecasts of his basic decimal concept, for very few ideas in this world are absolutely new) But Dewey's merging of these two classificational concepts, his casting of them in an amazingly practical and persuasively logical synthesis, his straightforward adoption of an arabic-numeral nomenclature with its clever and consistent use of the value of zero—all these were new Finally, because they were new, they needed an evangel, and Dewey was an evangel *par excellence*

Cutter's Classification, although it uses a different nomenclature and a 35-character base instead of a 10 character one, is, in the broader sense of the word, just as "decimal" as is Dewey's And the main nomenclative weakness of the splendidly proportioned, much more scholarly, and much more up-to-date Library of Congress Classification is that it departs from the basic Dewey concept, and uses a serial instead of a decimal nomenclature It is noteworthy that, with this last single excep-

tion no new classification if it has ignored Dewey s basic concepts has achieved other than the most limited sort of acceptance As for relative location we now take it so much for granted that many a present day librarian does not even know what the phrase means Only in Europe does fixed location survive

We have already remarked that irregular schedule expansion has distorted the originally clear cut Decimal Classification picture just as the passage of time has rendered parts of it obsolete has forced circumlocutions and intercalations to permit the inclusion of new material and has put much of the detailed subordination out of balance But even though the original *Dewey* Decimal Classification may some day be completely outmoded to be superseded by some new decimal classification conforming with greater practicality to the eternal flux of printed human expression there seems little or no likelihood that any new classification will ever be developed that will not pay homage to the two basic Dewey contributions

The original Decimal Classification has been referred to as amazingly logical So it appeared to its first users Many of us can remember feeling when we pored over it for the first time not that it was at all Procrustean but rather how happy a chance it was for librarians that all human knowledge had come into being neatly wrapped up in ten pound packages! Of course as the Decimal Classification grew—and as we ourselves grew bibliographically—we came to see more clearly that it

had its biases, its arbitrary consolidations and separations Yet, despite these, it was, as a whole, such a vast improvement over any other library classification ever devised that it was natural for its first devotees—including Dewey himself—to think that it had forever solved the book classificatory problem Now we know that all classifications are tools of transitory effectiveness, that, of all chimeras, the perfect and final book classification is the most fleeting

V

THE CONTRIBUTIONS—THE LIBRARY SCHOOL

IT IS TYPICAL of the paradoxes that marked all of Melvil Dewey s life that the world s first library school—his conception and creation—began where it was not wanted was conducted from its very first day in direct violation of the explicit orders of the trustees of the college was initiated without funds without faculty without equipment—in fact without anything but students and enthusiasm Although from the larger viewpoint it proved to be one of Columbia University s most important ventures in the educational field it hung on almost by an eyelash for three years and was then ignominiously kicked out To make the paradox complete the school was triumphantly re instated at Columbia nearly forty years later If ever the log plus Hopkins theory of a college was exemplified in practice it was the Columbia Library School in its opening days It had nothing—not even the right to exist in the form that Dewey himself very definitely intended that it should exist

It will be seen at once that the initiation of the school that was to transform—if not actually to create—the library profession was Dewey esque to the last degree Although the school was not opened until 1887 the idea

of it had been germinating in Dewey's mind for years As for himself, he realized fully what it might eventually lead to, and it abundantly realized his far-sighted intent But it is obvious that when, on May 7th, 1883 and May 5th, 1884, respectively, the trustees of Columbia College passed two resolutions, the first appointing Melvil Dewey college librarian, the other setting up the Columbia College School of Library Economy, they did not dream of the indefinitely expanding ripples of causation and effect which they were setting in motion

A few months before their permissive resolution we find Dewey applying to the American Library Association, at the Buffalo conference of that year, for its endorsement of his newest undertaking, the proposed school It was to teach, according to the memorandum that he read

1 Practical Bibliography To teach what author and treatise is wanted
2 Book To teach what edition is best to buy or borrow, whenever there is a choice of editions
3 Reading To teach how to get from the book what is wanted, and no more, most quickly and easily
4 Literary Methods (for want of a better name) To teach how to remember, record, classify, arrange, index, and in every way make most available for future use, what has been gotten from the books

The American Library Association was already a progressive body, but even for this group the idea of establishing a school to teach librarianship was a little

novel Indeed some of the elder statesmen were minded to give his plan short shrift Mrs Henry A Carr has left us a record of the discussion that ensued and of the action taken Messrs Smith Mann Cutter Merrill Carr Green and Crunden spoke in favor of the proposed school Messrs Poole Chamberlain and Billings spoke emphatically against it Dr Billings moved that a committee be appointed to draft a resolution expressing the feelings of the Association in regard to the proposed school and the motion being passed President Winsor appointed Cutter Chamberlain Mann Carr and Merrill On the final day of the conference this committee reported

Resolved —That this Association desires to express their gratification that the trustees of Columbia College are considering the propriety of giving instruction in library work and hopes that the experiment may be tried

This report was signed by Cutter Mann Carr and Merrill Judge Chamberlain in a minority report asked that the matter be referred to a committee to report more definitely at the next meeting of the Association With characteristic caution Mr Bowker spoke in favor of the minority report They were outvoted however and the majority report adopted by the Association

The slightly less than unanimous approval of the Library Association was the least discouraging of the circumstances in which the new school began its career There were so many difficulties placed in its way that

any other man than Dewey would have thrown up his hands and quit before it started. For one thing, although the trustees had grudgingly granted their new librarian permission—subject to certain very definite restrictions—to open the new school, they had explicitly given him nothing whatever with which to open it. For this, and other reasons, although permission to establish it was voted in 1884, it was not opened until January, 1887.

In a letter written many years later, Dewey thus describes that momentous opening:

There were strong reasons for remembering January 5, 1887, for it marked one of the sharpest battles of my life for what I knew to be right. Twenty four hours before I was to meet the first class I was formally notified by the chairman of the committee on buildings, representing the trustees, that I would not be allowed any room in Columbia for my new school because the first class, like all that have succeeded it, proved, as I always expected, to have more women than men. The crisis sent President Barnard home ill, for he saw no escape from what seemed a final wrecking of my plans. It took the faith, not of a mustard seed, but of a whole mustard plaster, but I never for a moment faltered in my faith that the Library School would be born and live and grow. They assured me that I could not and should not. Dr. Barnard tried all the afternoon, with all his powers as president, and finally gave it up as impossible and, ill with mortification, sent for his physician.

I sent for the janitors, told them, as I did the first class when they arrived, that there were twenty when I only hoped for ten, and that I could find no room large enough and so must utilize the store room over

the chapel thus inspiring them with a little enthusiasm for meeting emergencies They moved out the packing boxes cleaned and scraped ran in temporary wires got some broken down tables and nailed on missing legs picked up odd chairs where we could get them without encountering the police sent a truck for some more to my house in New York and with smiling face without giving a hint of the volcano on which we all stood I welcomed the first class and launched the first library school Later the enemies of women in Columbia planned my Waterloo and appointed a committee with Mayor Seth Low of Brooklyn as chairman to report whether I should be expelled from the University for admitting women to its instruction

But he added triumphantly We kindled a fire whose light will surely be seen down thru the generations I am always profoundly grateful that the Lord let me be the particular Moses to lead those particular children of Israel *into the promised land*

Dewey s memory of the School s first hectic day is fully corroborated by one of the students in that first class Frank C Patten later of the Rosenberg Library Galveston Texas

I remember that we were a little surprised when we appeared in Mr Dewey s office late in December 1886 supposing that all was in readiness for the school to proceed This was not the case however and we waited with patience and confidence in Mr Dewey with his magnetic personality and great enthusiasm I don t re member how long it was We students did not know much about what the real difficulty was and did not

learn, as I remember, until quite a long time afterwards

For lectures, etc, we met in the open space in the north end of the room The building was an old one and the floor we occupied was roughly furnished But our class was imbued with a pioneer spirit and did not mind any of the inconveniences or the extemporized facilities

The paragraphs just quoted afford the key to the opposition of the trustees to the new School Columbia was not then coeducational, and they were determined that it should not be—anywhere Dewey was equally determined that women should be admitted to his new school On this entirely quixotic platform—a platform without a shred of legal right to support it—he risked the future of the school, his job and his professional reputation

It is, however, evident from other records that, although this was his outstanding issue so far as the trustees were concerned, Dewey, with his peculiar ability to do so, had managed to tread on a number of other toes He had stubbornly insisted, for instance, that rules were rules, and that professors should pay fines on overdue books like everyone else (How familiar this sounds!) He was accused of being boastful and vigorous in his library reports to a degree "not in accordance with academic propriety and the dignity of the College" (Probably true) He was accused of being "impatient, and unwilling to follow accepted precedents" (Undoubtedly true) Whatever the cause, and

regardless of whoever was at fault it was a fact that he was not overpopular with his faculty colleagues President Barnard, however defended him warmly In three years the American Library Association had turned from lukewarm acceptance of the School to enthusiastic support In a resolution passed in 1888 it said

> Let us with the utmost cordiality and gratefully express our thanks to Mr Dewey for taking this additional step in advance for inaugurating and carrying to a successful issue a movement that is of the greatest importance in raising the standard of librarianship '

As for his students they were as they have always been the most devoted and enthusiastic of partisans In an issue of *Library Notes* in the same year 1888 Mary Wright Plummer who was soon after to go out and start the second library school—and a new sequence of ripples—wrote

> Perhaps no body of instructors ever had a more expectant class or one more ignorant of the subject to be entered upon than were most of the members of the School of Library Economy on the 5th of January last It is almost a wonder that the ferment of energy and enthusiasm with which we listened to and attempted to follow our instructions did not burst out the walls of the superannuated building

Despite its handicaps the School from the start did a well coordinated and thoroughly effective job In his first annual report dated June 20 1887 its director notes that 108 lectures were given by the regular library

staff (72 by Dewey himself, 26 by W S Biscoe, and 10 by G H Baker), and 75 by outside volunteer lecturers The list of these latter is really imposing and worth reprinting as indicative of the quality of the School's instruction Dewey evidently had no intention that it was to be a cloistered retreat

Dr J S Billings—National Medical Library, Washington, R R Bowker—Publishers Weekly and Library Journal, Hon Mellen Chamberlain—Boston Public Library, Ellen M Coe—New York Free Circulating Library, F M Crunden—St Louis Public Library, C A Cutter—Boston Athenaeum, J Edmands—Philadelphia Mercantile Library, W E Foster—Providence Public Library, W I Fletcher—Amherst College Library, Albert R Frey—Astor Library, New York, C R Gillett—Union Theological Seminary Library, S S Green—Worcester Free Public Library, Dr Reuben A Guild—Brown University Library, G Hannah—Long Island Historical Society, Brooklyn, Caroline M Hewins—Hartford Library, W C Lane—Harvard College, J N Larned—Buffalo Public Library, Appleton Morgan—Pres New York Shakespeare Society, C Alex Nelson—Astor Library, New York, W T Peoples—New York Mercantile Library, R B Poole—Librarian, Y M C A, New York, Dr W F Poole—Chicago Public Library, G H Putnam—G P Putnam's Sons, E C Richardson—Hartford Theological Seminary, F Saunders—Astor Library, New York, J Schwartz—Apprentices Library, New York, A R Spofford—Librarian of Congress, F Vinton—Princeton College Library, J L Whitney—Boston Public Library

But, from the beginning, Melvil Dewey *was* the School, his personality was its inspiration and driving

force It was his continual preachment that library work was not a job but at once a sacred trust and a great opportunity for service He said

> We count a chief gain of their course that each shall go out not in the spirit of repose but in that of a great awakening that none shall fall back into that partial lethargy which curses so many libraries today When our every pupil is each in his own sphere doing his all and his best according to the strength that has been given him then we shall feel that our first skirmish line has begun the march At this time in library history as never before since the first book was written the fields are white already to harvest and the air is full of hope Whatever else it may accomplish or fail in this School will not send out a race of dawdlers

It did not Most of the students who heard his personal lectures have over the years probably forgotten what he said about the details of classification and cataloging but the one thing that he meant to remain with them does remain—his enthusiasm for library service Dewey wasn t directing a school, he was preaching a crusade Books were for him the tools—and the essential tools—with which man might build for himself a better world He was much more than a teacher He was a prophet pointing forward to a glorious promised land He invited you to enlist under a marching banner *And you did'*

Dewey s success as an educator the pre eminent quality of his service to his School are abundantly attested by a letter that President Barnard wrote on December 15 1888 to Seth Low Excerpts from this

letter are later quoted at length in another connection. It is sufficient here to note that in it Barnard particularly commended the work of the new School and was evidently anxious that his trustees should be fully cognizant of it. In his annual report for 1887, he says: "The number of applicants was three times as many as had been looked for." And he comments upon the enthusiasm of the students:

> A fact exceedingly encouraging to those with whom this scheme originated has been the intense interest manifested by the students of the school in their work, and the untiring industry with which they have followed it up, many of them often remaining at the library to a late hour of the night, engaged in writing up their lecture notes or in practising the methods taught in class.
>
> A well-qualified librarian is of as much importance as the library itself and the librarian's office has risen to the rank of a profession.

But, within three weeks of Barnard's letter to Low, the pot that had been bubbling so long and so furiously boiled over. On December 20, 1888, Dewey's resignation as Columbia's librarian had been presented to the trustees of the college and, on January 7, 1889, it had been accepted. Had he been guilty of "gross insubordination," as charged? Unquestionably. His retention of women students in his library-school classes was in direct violation of the trustees' express prohibition. Had he any justification? Clearly, legally, not a whit. Someone has to be responsible for the conduct of an educational in-



FACULTY OF THE NEW YORK STATE LIBRARY SCHOOL 18[illegible]

Reading from left to right: Edith Davenport Fuller, [illegible], Florence Woodworth, Melvil Dewey, Mary Cutler Fairchild, Mrs. Alice Jones, W. S. Biscoe, and May Seymour

stitution. These powers and duties were, at Columbia as at most colleges, vested in the trustees. In this case the trustees were estimable and, on the whole, amiable, able, and well-intentioned gentlemen. One could well imagine how puzzled and annoyed they were by the utterly unprecedented antics of their librarian. What are you going to do with a man who just won't stay put, a man who is, you are told, one of the best men you can get in his professional field, a man who is doing for you what is in most respects an unprecedentedly satisfactory job, but who blandly and flatly ignores and defies your repeated and explicit commands on one particular point?

Dewey moved the School with him to Albany, but that did not mean that its troubles were in any sense over. Although their reasons were different, some of the New York State Board of Regents were just as much opposed to its continuance as the Columbia trustees had been. In a different way its position was about as anomalous at Albany as it had been at New York. It was just as inadequately financed as ever. At Columbia all of its staff had had to give their services, and at Albany we find the Regents resolving "That the director of the library be authorized to employ such assistants as are found best fitted for the work and are willing to give their services for satisfactory time without other compensation than the instruction and supervision furnished by the library." A Regents minute of March 19, 1896 defensively explains that "the entire receipts of the

school are from the tuition of students" From these the School paid all its own expenses of every sort, except "the salary of one junior clerk" and $50 a month paid Dewey himself "for expenses incurred because of the library school"

Dewey realized the situation He had taken the Library School along with him to Albany, not because he thought it an ideal move, but because he saw no alternative It was obvious that the Columbia trustees would not continue the School if he left it in their custody But he was clearsighted enough to realize that the state capitol building at Albany was also not the proper location for it He pointed out himself the very obvious arguments to the contrary

Sooner or later the school will be a target for those impatient to inherit the space it occupies Its opponents' question "why a school is kept in the capitol any more for one profession than for another" sounds very plausible The atmosphere of the capitol is quite the reverse of what should be chosen for a school The state ought to support the training of professional librarians just as surely as it does that of professional teachers, but what school man would consent to have his normal school carried on in the office of the superintendent of public instruction in the capitol building?

In later years Dewey tried repeatedly to secure backing for the School from Andrew Carnegie so that its independent establishment might be assured, but never succeeded in convincing him that library schools perform any essential educational function To the very

end of his term at Albany the administration of the Library School remained on a precarious and temporary footing its support never fully regularized in the budget of the Regents[1]

From January 1889 when he moved to Albany to 1899 Dewey was both Secretary of the Board of Regents and State Librarian The School moved to Albany in April 1889 and eventually became well known as the New York State Library School As State Librarian Dewey was also Director of the School During these eleven years when he was almost swamped with the detail of the multiplied and ramified duties that he developed for himself it was the Library School that was closest to his heart To it he gave his best thought He brought with him from Columbia a devoted group of assistants He added others It would not be far amiss to say that they—Florence Woodworth Ada Alice Jones Salome Cutler Fairchild W S Biscoe Frank Walter May Seymour Edna Sanderson—conducted the school while he inspired it Even after his resignation as Secretary of the Board of Regents in 1899 he continued to act as State Librarian and Director of the Library School until 1905 and his associations with it were changed little during this six year continuum Few men live to see their faith in anything so well justified as Melvil Dewey's was in the School that he founded In 1926 Columbia University made handsome amends to him by taking back under its wing the School

[1]One of the first acts of Commissioner Draper was however to correct this situation Minutes of Board of Regents December 14 1905

that, forty years before, it had treated so ignominiously.

In the meantime what a record that School had made! True to his prophetic vision, its graduates had vitalized library service, not only in this country but in a half dozen countries abroad. Everywhere they were in the forefront of their chosen profession. Eight subsequent library schools were founded by New York State graduates, and, of all the other library schools, half have been headed or staffed by graduates of Albany.

This book is not a history of a school, but the life of a man, but never was it more true that a school was a man. Who can ever calculate the total professional influence of the hundreds of pioneer librarians whom he and his faculty trained and inspired and sent out? For most present-day librarians not trained directly by the School were trained by those whom it had trained. In accordance with his boyish self-dedication, Dewey did, indeed, through his School, multiply himself exceedingly. He planted the first seed of trained librarianship, and he lived to see that seed increase many thousandfold. No one today needs to argue that his little Columbia Library School was a brilliant success. The living proof of that success is present wherever librarians happen to meet together today. James I. Wyer once recorded that, of all the things that Dewey attempted, none gave him "serener satisfaction" than the School.

Was the fact that the School was in difficulties of one sort or another from its very start Dewey's fault alone? Here, as in many similar cases in Dewey's life, it is not

easy to apportion relative shares of blame The plain fact was that he was ahead of his time and was unwilling or unable to show the patience that the situation demanded From the records available it is pretty clear that the Columbia trustees were entirely correct in the position they took no permission to open any Columbia College classes to women had ever been granted by them On the other hand it also appears that Dewey had acted with the full knowledge and even with the approval of his immediate administrative superior President Barnard Like Dewey Barnard was ahead of his educational contemporaries He undoubtedly hoped that Dewey s aggressive courage on this point would carry the day Eventually time fully justified both men but in the meanwhile Dewey s position at Columbia was made at first unpleasant and at last intolerable

The wisdom of Dewey s insistence that women be admitted into library work is now about as self evident as the success of the School itself On the other hand it must be said for the trustees that coeducation at Columbia involved a great deal more than merely the Library School It is also true that most of the trustees appreciated neither the worth nor the purpose of the new venture It is further true that the episode involved a clash of personalities as well as a clash of policies Dewey sold his ideas everywhere except to that one set of customers to whom a successful sale was most important of all his trustees

Yet was his judgment wrong? One thinks of his students and their enthusiasm perhaps, after all, he knew best where to lavish his vitality!

VI

THE CONTRIBUTIONS—
AS THE EVANGEL OF LIBRARIANSHIP

FROM THE TIME Dewey left Amherst until his death he was continually working to create not only a library profession but a library economy To give librarians—as a body—unity solidarity cooperativeness the desire to make common approach to their common problems he devoted for sixty years an enormous amount of his time and energy But he also sought to perfect tools with which they might work more effectively It is to this lesser but still extremely important library activity of his that this chapter is devoted To speak of it as lesser is to use words relatively for had any other librarian done what Dewey did in any single one of the various fields grouped together in this chapter he would for that one contribution alone forever deserve well of his colleagues Dewey did them *all*—and yet we term them collectively his lesser contributions!

Dewey is so much better remembered for other of his interests that it is easy to forget that before anything else he was himself a *librarian*—and if we are to believe those whom he served an unusually effective one When he left Amherst it was felt to be very much Amherst's loss As for his work as librarian of Columbia we have

the following explicit testimony of President Barnard in the letter to Seth Low already mentioned

My dear Mr Low Certain incidents of recent occurrence make it seem to me a duty to make a written record of my appreciation of the value of the work done here by Mr Dewey, as chief librarian of the college To understand this it is necessary to refer to the low condition to which the library had sunk during the greater part of this century The books, such as they were, were little used, and not appreciated by either students or officers, visitors to the library were few and scarcely any one resorted to it for reading Your own recollection will tell you that the library was practically of no use to you during your student life

On the occurrence of a vacancy of the office, and when the library was about to be removed into the new building, the committee resolved to institute a reform By consent of the committee I invited Mr Melvil Dewey, then director of the Library Bureau in Boston, and recent librarian of Amherst College, whom I had known for 10 years preceding, and whom I believe to be the most accomplished librarian in the country, to be present at a meeting of the Committee Mr Dewey accepted the invitation He was so evidently a master of the subject, and proposed so many and so novel views in regard to library management, that he greatly impressed the minds of the members It had not occurred to me to nominate him as our librarian here The committee, however, manifested a strong desire that he should undertake for us the work which he evidently so well understood He met their advances reluctantly, but after much pressure consented that his name should be placed before the board In doing so, how-

ever he was obliged to make considerable pecuniary sacrifices to which he was willing to submit in consideration of the assurances given him by the committee that they would give him hearty support in carrying out his views Mr Dewey was therefore nominated and elected in 1883 taking office at the same time at which the library was removed into the new building His first task was to assemble together all the books belonging to the college scattered in the different departments and belonging to the literary societies and make a complete catalogue of the whole This was a heavy undertaking which occupied about three years before its completion By a remarkable system of economy in the purchase of books he made available the annual appropriation of funds for the rapid increase of the number of volumes and by the interest awakened among friends of the library on the subject he increased the number of volumes at a rate which in the last five years has increased the number three fold By the creation of a large reading room and the introduction of reading tables for 200 visitors at a time and by the introduction of assistants to bring volumes on demand to all the readers at their places and to assist in looking up authorities he has encouraged the use of books to such an extent as to make the library a favorite place of resort for students and officers alike This has done more than any other measure to encourage the spirit of investigation in our college and to make this system of University instruction a success

It was also a part of Mr Dewey s plan to meet the entering classes every year at the beginning of the session in order to give them instruction in the use of books and the consultation of authorities a plan which is pursued with excellent results

But the principal service which Mr Dewey has rendered has been the inspiration which his fervent zeal and enthusiasm has infused into the whole body of students, whereby they have become warmly interested in the subjects which are taught in the classes, and stimulated to endeavor to produce something original of their own In this respect his influence has been invaluable and has been of more important service to the college than that of any other officer

I am conversant with the details of his management to an extent which is true of no other officer, and I am very confident that he has not exceeded the bounds of his authority in any particular His ardent enthusiasm, however, has caused him sometimes to be in advance of public opinion, and he has seemed therefore to be sometimes over positive Should he leave us, I should esteem his loss a very serious one It is not difficult to fill the vacancy by a man reputed to be competent, but I do not know where you will find a man whose whole soul is so entirely filled up with devotion to his profession He has been a constant stimulus to intellectual effort in the college, and an inspiration which has reached to every member of the institution

No man could ask for warmer or more appreciative support from his superior It is evident that Dewey had been pouring new wine into old bottles faster than they would stand it, but it is also evident that it *was* new wine, a heady and exhilarating beverage *That,* indeed, was what marked Dewey as a librarian, his continual insistence upon trying out new ways of doing things

Some technical details of library practice are today so unshakably fundamental, so absolutely taken for

granted that it is difficult for the present generation of librarians to realize that they were once unknown that they were once causes that had to be developed and propagandized for Some of them indeed were the subject matter of protracted argument and had to be ardently and persistently fought for over a long period With many of these fundamental concepts—particularly with those that involved fighting—Dewey had a great deal if not most to do We forget for instance that all our now accepted library standardizations were not revelations from some Sinai they did not come into being of themselves Originally somebody had to have the vision to see the greater efficiency that they would make possible and then that someone had to persuade and cajole and nag his colleagues into giving up all their chaotic individualities of size and form and custom to accept the new and common standards offered In the early days of librarianship the man who had most of the vision and who did most of this persuading and nagging for standardization was unquestionably Melvil Dewey

Take for example our standard catalog card the 7½ x 12½ centimeter card with which we are all so familiar We forget that this very simple thing this standardization of size that makes possible all our Library of Congress card distribution all our union catalogs all our ability to buy mass produced—and so reasonably priced—card cabinets was originally an entirely arbitrary determination When Dewey entered

library work almost every library used a different size of catalog card Each followed its own whim Some had cards smaller than the 7½ x 12½ centimeter size, most had larger Perhaps not one used the exact 7½ x 12½ centimeter size that he proposed It took many years for the library world to change over completely to the new size of card (some libraries continued to use their old "blanket-size" cards up to within the current decade), now the "standard card" is in practically universal use

On the subject of abbreviations—short cuts in writing of every sort—Dewey was almost fanatically partisan Some of his abbreviative short cuts have stuck, some have not Few of us now realize their source The system of colon abbreviations for men's and women's most common first-names was widely used by librarians for many years, but now is pretty well forgotten The Dewey scheme of month name abbreviations is, on the other hand, still generally accepted library practice

Apropos of these month abbreviations, the following anecdote bears repetition When Dewey dictated what he thought was his deathbed statement, the nurse who took it down headed it "Third of February, nineteen hundred and twenty seven" A few days later, Dewey, reading over the statement, and being then slightly better, slashed through this date line, and in a feeble hand substituted, "3 Feb 1927" Years later Dorkas Fellows happened to see the amended document and commented matter-of-factly that, when he made the cor-

rection Dewey must still have been a very sick man Why? Because he should have written 3 F 27!

Standardization is but one phase one angle in the development of a technology of librarianship There are others A profession has to have some method of placing qualified persons in positions and of finding persons for positions—and in its early days Dewey s Library Bureau conducted the world s first library employment agency A profession has to have a journal or journals of its own it has to have an association or associations of its own it has to develop equipment especially devised to meet its professional needs and a business house or houses to manufacture and supply that equipment With every one of these fundamental developments Melvil Dewey was when they were in their embryonic stages intimately concerned in most cases the prime mover

In connection with his work as secretary of the American Library Association Mr Dewey conducted in its earliest days what he termed a laboratory for the testing of library supplies and equipment of every sort and a sort of agency by means of which the makers of such materials and their prospective users could be brought into touch with each other At first this agency was another drawer in his desk The sales in its first year were less than three hundred dollars and his account book bears this annotation Run as private investment till June 30 1877 and then gave all with profit to date to the American Library Association

under the name of the Library Supplies Committee"

Dewey still, but now as the "A L A Library Supplies Committee," continued this business in library supplies from 1877-79 Sales were still nominal It seemed clear to him that, if this was a *business*—and it clearly was—the Association should not conduct it So—but still "Dewey" under a different name and setup—in December, 1879, he formed, with Cutter and six others, the Readers and Writers Economy Company as an outright commercial firm to manufacture and deal in library supplies and equipment At the start its business was still mainly in his mind, its office was still the same drawer in the same Boston desk

The Readers and Writers Economy Company had an unfortunate and hectic career In Dewey's own words,[1] this was its history

> During the year while I was sole manager its growth was very rapid Stores were opened in Boston, New York and Chicago, and there were 120 men on the pay-rolls of the stores and the two factories the rich promise of the business had drawn into it an element caring nothing for my educational work, which was to me the main thing In October, 1880, I resigned connection with the business, which passed into other hands, and immediately ran down in a way discreditable to all connected with it In January, 1882, it was closed entirely

Dewey was not disheartened He proceeded to start

[1] M Dewey, *The Chronicles of '74 Since Graduation from Amherst College* (Warren, Mass 1885), p 16 7

up the same business all over again this time under the name of the Library Bureau and again at his same Boston address

Then something happened Two young men Parker and H E Davidson had come into the picture as protégés of Dewey They had seen the possibilities that lay behind his little company they took it over giving Dewey a substantial stock interest in it. With its development as with so many of his ideas Dewey lived long enough to see a tiny entity become enormous to watch two young men whom he had originally inspired go on to ever greater successes of their own In the case of the Library Bureau the success was spectacular Under Davidson s management it became a pioneer in revo lutionizing not merely library equipment—which as a matter of fact in a few years became only a side line in their sales—but business-office equipment and business methods generally In vertical filing for office corre spondence and in office card files and systems the Library Bureau was an initiator In due time it was operating numerous factories for various types of office equipment its sales offices circled the globe its annual income ran up into the millions And all this came from a desk-drawer business with initial sales of three hun dred dollars! For years Dewey continued to have a large and very profitable financial interest in the Library Bureau eventually he sold it to put the proceeds into the development of the Lake Placid Club

In the early days of the Library Bureau Davidson and

Dewey quarreled continually over its financing and management But we must remember that Dewey quarreled with everyone, and Davidson was big enough to hold his own at the time and no rancor afterward Referring to their first days together back there in the little Boston office, Mr Davidson said of Dewey, using almost exactly the same words that were used by dozens of others who knew him

> The thousandth detail that Mr Dewey wrought out into almost exact completeness shows his vision These things hark back to the little offices at 1 Tremont Place, and to the young man fresh from college who was its dynamic force How much is owing to his zeal, to the optimism that knew no obstacles, to the vision that optimism fed upon and to the inspiration that radiated from it, we shall never measure

Although they quarreled, Davidson and Dewey retained to the end, through the years in which each was taking on ever greater cares, a high regard for each other's abilities And it was Davidson who, when Dewey died, wrote to Mrs Dewey "A star has fallen, and the world is poorer indeed"

VII

THE CONTRIBUTIONS— THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS

We have already referred from various angles to Dewey s connection with the American Library Association When we say that Dewey was intimately and deeply connected with the birth of the American Library Association we are not asserting that he founded it even though he himself makes that statement and even though some of his colleagues at that famous centennial meeting at Philadelphia enthusiastically conferred that honor upon their youthful but indefatigable secretary It does mean however that no other man had a larger share in that founding than its No 1 member As to who originally conceived the idea of calling that centennial meeting of librarians the meeting that resulted in the formation of the American Library Association a few months later there are several claimants and the probability is that it sprang into several minds quite independently What there is no question about is that Dewey took up the idea regardless of its original source and by dint of a veritable barrage of letters and conversations turned it into a reality At that meeting so far as he could he kept himself in the background He a youngster just out of college was in the

presence of the venerable deans of his profession—and he so conducted himself Indeed, as the record clearly shows, it was only after repeated urgings that he was prevailed upon even to say anything publicly about his new Classification But it is also perfectly clear, both from the comments of others present and from a reading between the lines of the official record of the proceedings, that he was omnipresent He didn't "arrange" everything, but he saw to it that those who were supposed to do the arranging did! The original solicitations to attend, the notices of accommodations and entertainment at Philadelphia, the agenda of meetings and papers, all bear the mark of his characteristic style

This general impression of the dominant part that Dewey played in launching the American Library Association is categorically stated by Charles A Cutter

> I suppose of late years many persons have desired a meeting of librarians, but the credit of independently conceiving the idea, of expressing it with such force as to win a hearing, of talking over those of us who were incredulous or indifferent, and of bringing us together in this Convention from which we have received so much profit and enjoyment, is incontestably due to our energetic, enthusiastic, and persuasive Secretary And more than this, he has, I understand, defrayed all the preliminary expenses of circulars, correspondence etc It is too much to be indebted to him for energy and money Let us pay both as far as possible, the first by gratitude, the second in kind I move that we tender our thanks to the Secretary for all his services, and I suggest that each member, on leaving, pay him one dollar

And for fifteen years he continued as secretary (with out compensation of course) to carry the Association along on the full tide of his unquenchable enthusiasm The work was done not only without compensation but the Association got it almost without expense There is extant a memorandum reading For expenses of secretary s office from Jan 1 1885 to May 25 1888 $ 3 20 Nor did he even seek recognition for himself for his work He was quite content to see others the veterans of the profession Winsor and Poole Cutter and Crunden sit in all the posts of honor Not until 1890 did he permit his name to be urged for the presi dency He was equally content to see the various com mittees of the Association get all the credit for its detailed constructive work It is only when one reads the reports of these various early committees and finds in every other paragraph a phrase that is distinctly Dewey that one realizes of how much of this com mittee work he was the mainspring or as he puts it himself the gadfly

Sixty years is in the history of the library profession a long time ago Today the enormously complex—and enormously valuable—work of the American Library Association requires for its handling a paid staff of several scores of employees In comparison we must remember how for years—and those years its critical formative ones—Melvil Dewey had to do for a strug gling little Association the same kind if not the same quantity of work—and to do it with no staff no funds

no office, no compensation For its first fifteen years a drawer in his desk was "A L A. headquarters" He may not have "founded" the Association, but certainly he is largely responsible for carrying it safely, and with continually strengthened vitality, through its childhood and youth

In two other phases of library-association work he was—if we may use the term—an associate pioneer We have already seen that Dewey played a part in the starting of the Library Association of the United Kingdom, the British counterpart of our own A L A, he being one of the group of American librarians who journeyed to England soon after the establishment of the A L A to propagandize for, and to assist in the founding of, a British Association

Finally, soon after coming to Columbia as librarian, he called together all of the librarians of the metropolitan area, and suggested that it would be mutually helpful for them to meet, in order to get better acquainted with each other and to discuss their common problems Shortly thereafter, in November, 1885, there was formed the New York Library Club, an organization still in existence, with R R Bowker as its first president, and—it would seem inevitably—Dewey as its first secretary

Mr Bowker states[1] that he was also instrumental in founding the New York State Library Association It is certainly true that the state association met continuously

[1]R R Bowker "A Postscript," *Library Journal* 1896 v 21, p 52

for many years at the Lake Placid Club so that very definitely it received the Dewey impress in its formative years National state local foreign—in each of these associations Dewey was if not the actual originator, at least a prime mover

VIII

THE CONTRIBUTIONS—
LIBRARY PERIODICALS

ALTHOUGH DEWEY himself said categorically, "I founded the *Library Journal*,"[1] it would perhaps be more meticulously fair to say that he shared the credit for establishing the world's first library periodical with another man, perhaps with two R R Bowker and Frederick H Leypoldt That his share was the predominant one is, however, pretty clearly brought out in a careful summary of the known facts made by Beswick in his life of Frederick Leypoldt, published in pamphlet form by the office of *Publishers' Weekly* [2]

Leypoldt was a man after Dewey's own heart, an idealist in business, who wore himself into a premature grave endeavoring to provide the American publishing trade with complete and adequate bibliographical equipment To the attainment of this objective, the *Library Journal* was, of course, subordinate or accessory, nevertheless it was part of the Leypoldt vision There is little doubt, in view of the record, that the idea of starting a periodical for the library profession came into his

[1] M Dewey, *The Chronicles of '74 Since Graduation from Amherst College* (Warren, Mass 1885), p 16

[2] J W Beswick, *The Work of Frederick Leypoldt, Bibliographer and Publisher* (New York Bowker, 1942), 102 p

mind and Dewey s at about the same time--possibly as far back as 187.—and in any case quite independently There is little doubt that both—still quite independently one in Boston one in New York—developed plans for its publication Then each heard of the other s plans and they finally agreed (some time between March and May 1876) to a merger of their projects into one pub lication of which Leypoldt was to be the publisher with the publishing office in New York and Dewey the editor with the editorial office in Boston

As to further claims of priority Dewey had actually set up an editorial board for his proposed periodical and had arranged with Ginn Brothers for its printing Leypoldt as evidence that he at least had in mind the periodical proposed pointed to a column of Li brary and Bibliographical Notes which he had begun as a department in his *Publishers Weekly* just a few months before the *Library Journal* started Dewey claimed that even this Library Notes column was started by Leypoldt at his own suggestion This claim was later tacitly admitted by Mr Bowker

Bowker s own contribution to the *Library Journal* was a not unimportant one but as was always the case with ventures with which he was connected it was rather that of originator than of conservator He had on his hands two idealistic enthusiasts neither of them caring half so much about making both ends meet as of effect ing certain worthwhile results Bowker had a banker s mind not a prophet s While bankers are not generally

speaking, folk who push the world farther along toward the millennium, they do help greatly in the badly needed job of keeping it floating meanwhile on an even keel. That was, essentially, Bowker's work—all his life. Other people supplied him with ideas; it was his task to bring the ideas down to earth, and make them earn their own bread and butter. (And eventually to return him, as they generally did, a very fair income!)

In the early days of the *Library Journal*, Bowker fully deserved his income, for the very good reason that driving such a runaway team as Leypoldt and Dewey was a full-sized task for any man. For several years, however, the net returns of the *Journal* were on the red side of the ledger. When Bowker went to London in 1880, to represent Harper & Brothers there, its financial difficulties reached a climax. By then it showed an accumulated deficit of twenty-five hundred dollars. With inadequate financing Leypoldt had plunged ahead with one new expensive bibliographical project after another, and in June, 1880, he found it necessary actually to suspend publication of the *Journal*.

This temporary suspension jolted the library world into a better realization of its obligations toward the publication. Promises of increased subscription and advertising support poured in. Dewey, with too much else on his hands, relinquished the general editorship to Cutter, while Leypoldt himself, and, upon his death shortly after, Mrs. Leypoldt, took over the office editorship. Finally it was arranged that the *Journal* was to

receive a subsidy for printing the annual proceedings of the American Library Association a mutually advantageous arrangement that was to continue for many years Within twelve months with this financial help the *Journal* was breaking even for the first time

Leypoldt was at the start fearful lest the library profession might not be able to supply enough editorial material to justify an entirely independent publication but Dewey as editor soon set his mind at ease on that point With amazing fecundity he filled its first issues with matter that still nearly seventy years later has significance and vitality Much of it he wrote himself but he was equally resourceful in stirring up others in the profession to write for the new journal He was always late with his own copy the perpetual despair of every printer and every publisher with whom he ever worked What he finally did send in was meaty and reflected the practical idealism and the enthusiastic quest for ever-greater efficiency and ever wider usefulness that form the essentials of Dewey s character He set high editorial standards for the *Journal* they have ever since been maintained

Dewey and Leypoldt were kindred souls They struck fire from each other and admired each other s work They were also both tremendously overworked always in financial difficulties and so always nervously overwrought Because of this it was only natural that at times their relationship should become strained—seriously but their quarrels were transient and Dewey in 1880 took occasion to pay a glowing tribute to Leypoldt s

'noble generosity and devotion to the library interests"
The chief cause of all Dewey-Leypoldt friction was financial Dewey was supposed to receive one hundred dollars a month as salary for acting as editor of the *Journal* Occasionally this salary was forthcoming, but generally Leypoldt simply didn't have anything to give him Both men were idealists, but both were trying to support families, and, when a financial *impasse* like this developed about every other month, the situation was one that contained explosive elements

Dewey's relations with Bowker also became seriously strained, and continued so for many years after he left the *Library Journal* But here there was a direct and fundamental conflict of temperament and viewpoint Like Dewey, Bowker had his fingers in many pies—how many, in view of the blindness with which he was for most of his life afflicted, is remarkable Otherwise one man was almost the exact antithesis of the other Bowker was, however, broadminded enough to give due credit to Dewey's ability He concludes his apologetic "Postscript" in the *Library Journal* in 1896 with these words

I should be sorry, by any sin of omission or of commission, to seem to deny to Mr Dewey any part of his large share, beyond that of any other one person, in general library development A great many good things are directly the result of his suggestion and inspiration Without his enthusiasm and energy it would have taken nearer a century, instead of half a generation, to have accomplished what has already been achieved

After he gave over the editorship of the *Library Journal* Dewey single handedly edited and published from 1886 to 1898 the second of library periodicals *Library Notes* which can only be described as the quintessence of the Dewey viewpoint in library economy It was really a continued report on progress As has already been suggested Dewey s two years at Amherst and four years at Columbia (before the School opened) were years of pioneer work in library organization and practice Every detail of the methods and equipment of his day went under his searching scrutiny to be discarded or modified as seemed to him called for He was sifting testing try ing retrying The results are to be found in *Library Notes* and in innumerable little paragraphs short arti cles committee reports and discussions elsewhere

IX

THE CONTRIBUTIONS—WOMEN IN LIBRARY WORK

IF ANY ONE library group more than another should be grateful to Melvil Dewey it is—as has already been suggested—the one consisting of its feminine members If it had not been for him, it is highly probable that today most of them would not be librarians at all At the history-making first meeting of American librarians at Philadelphia in 1876, out of 156 in attendance only ten were women (and one of these was the future Mrs Dewey) Compare this proportion of women with that present at any library meeting today Of course not all of this gain is due to Dewey, but, had he not fought their cause so valiantly, women's entry into library work would have come about far more slowly, their present numerical proportions would probably have been smaller, and their acceptance into executive positions less assured

We have referred to the controversy over the admission of women to the Library School, but that was not the start of this particular crusade It began, as a matter of fact, several years before the Library School opened its doors, when Dewey brought six girls—not dignified men, suitable for the place, but young snippets just out

of Wellesley—down to the Columbia Library to assist him in its reorganization Mrs Dewey helped him in se lecting and securing the six and all his life he referred to them as the Wellesley Half Dozen One of them Mrs Martha T Buckham wrote after his death

> As I think back upon the days in 1883 when Mr Dewey took six Wellesley graduates to work in Columbia Li brary I am more impressed with his amazing daring At that time Columbia College was almost as hermeti cally sealed to women as is a monastery and the advent of a group of young college women appearing in the sacred precincts must indeed have given occasion for dire forebodings Mr Dewey s courage and daring were fur ther shown in his introduction of six absolutely untrained workers to aid in putting into shape the accumulation of volumes which Columbia Library possessed Trained workers in those days there were none and long and pa tiently did Mr Dewey and his able co worker Mr Bis coe train the willing but ignorant six To one of the Wellesley Six Mr Dewey s enthusiasm courage and optimism have always been an inspiration in her life and she is glad of this opportunity to voice her gratitude that she had training under him

Since the Wellesley Half Dozen were to all intents and purposes the world s first class in library science even though they came several years before the formal opening of the Library School their names deserve to be recorded They were Alice Ayers (Mrs Benjamin D Smith) Mary M Deveny (Mrs E A Wasson) Ade laide Eaton (Mrs Adelaide F Abbe) Winifred Edger ton (Mrs Winifred E Merrill) Nellie F Page (Mrs

Helen Page Bates), and Martha Tyler (Mrs Martha T Buckham) Of the six, Winifred Edgerton was the first *woman* to receive a degree from Columbia, that of Doctor of Philosophy, in 1886, her dissertation being entitled "Multiple Integrals" That the Wellesley Half Dozen had proved a satisfactory experiment was indirectly proved by an address that Dewey delivered on March 13, 1886, before the Association of Collegiate Alumnae, for its title was "Librarianship as a Profession for College-Bred Women"

Of course Dewey's great service to the American feminist movement was his stubborn and absolutely unequivocal insistence that women could, should and would be admitted to his Columbia Library School classes—regardless of rules or orders, trustees or faculty When, about forty years later, the School returned to Columbia, President Nicholas Murray Butler, all his life a warm friend of Dewey, said

It would be quite impossible for me to give you as accurate and as amusing a notion of the Columbia College of my own undergraduate days and immediately thereafter as Mr Dewey gave in that address The incidents he recounted and described are from our point of view not only amusing and amazing, but quite impossible The account which he gave of his formal trial, charged with the offense of having admitted women to the University without authority, was, in view of all that has happened since, ludicrous in the extreme As I listened to him and realized how absolutely true to life was every word of what he said, it seemed to me that he must be talking of an-

other world and another place so far has Columbia come in one relatively short lifetime

Dewey insisted that women should share equally with men every phase of library activity and equally with men every sort of professional recognition and honor This unslacking persistence did not apply merely to the School for in 189? we find him arguing with considerable warmth that Salome Cutler Fairchild regardless of her sex should be chairman of the Committee for the International Library Exhibit at the approaching Chicago World s Fair—simply because she was the best person to do the job All through his life he pleaded for an equal place for women with men in all the world s work and pleaded for it with passionate and convincing sincerity Theresa West Elmendorf commented that his attitude toward women co-workers was always large and generous To me it was she says one of the signs of his real bigness He did not find it necessary to talk down to us He talked as from a level without any sense of that patronage or condescension that lesser men consciously or unconsciously very commonly use toward us One of his personal secretaries Grace (Hewitt) Towle comments I don t believe there was ever a member of his staff who did not feel at ease in his presence He always called each one by his given name and was always ready to listen to the smallest suggestion that might come from some of his assistants

Of course Dewey was not the only man in library work *willing* that women should enter it although a

few of his older confrères were just about as violently opposed to the idea as was any Columbia trustee But being "willing" to accept this particular innovation, and being ardently convinced of its desirability—and so ardently convinced as to be ready to fight for it, for years, against apparently insurmountable odds, and at very real personal sacrifice—obviously these are two quite different things Today, when women librarians are so completely taken for granted, it may well be doubted if they themselves realize how utterly different library conditions were for them back in 1876, and how great and far-reaching is the debt that they owe to the particular library pioneer whose life this volume records

X

THE DIVERSIONS—
THE REGENTS

IT MAY ONCE more sound paradoxical to say that Melvil Dewey s mental fertility and physical energy were really a handicap to his main lifework but there is much more than a modicum of truth in this assertion For this fer tility and energy were so great that at times—many times —they overflowed into channels quite outside of what was his great interest and as a result *it* suffered How much more Dewey might have accomplished for librari anship if his time and energy had not been diverted to any of these other things is of course entirely hypothetical But they *were* diversions and in this chapter and the next two they are so labeled Such labeling will be criticized by the more ardent of Dewey partisans—just as Dewey himself would have criticized it For one of the most ingenious of his rationalizations was that in which he set up metric and spelling reforms as two sides of a sort of triangular synthesis of total educational endeavor

Regardless of what we label them there is no question but that in terms of hours and years his educational interests his two reform movements and the Lake Placid Club occupied far more than half of Dewey s life just

as they occupy more than half the pages of the authorized Dewey biography Yet, for all that, and writing here not merely as a librarian for librarians, but as one seeking to the best of his ability to make a sober appraisal of Melvil Dewey's place in the development of human culture, one may venture the prophecy that a century hence he will be remembered *only* as a librarian All his stubborn tilting at spelling reform and metric reform, all his long endeavors at pleasurable resort-club development, even his eleven hectic years as an educational administrator, will alike be forgotten, except as incidental by-lines in a formal biographical epitome

As has just been remarked, Dewey's ability to rationalize his own motives and acts, plus his consuming desire to arrange everything into a logical classificational pattern, was never better exemplified than in his own attitude toward these two reform movements When, in due time, it became necessary to add the Lake Placid Club (via the "Lake Placid Foundation") to his original educational triangle, duly add it he did, although to turn a vacation club-hotel resort (even the most delightful of club-hotel resorts) into an educational institution did place something of a strain upon even Dewey's powers of rationalization We must remember that this rationalization was not, so far as he was concerned, in any sense forced or insincere Had prison reform, or vivisection, or a religious reintegration, happened to make the same personal appeal to him, there is little doubt that the panacea for all our educational ills would have become,

automatically and inescapably a five or six or seven sided affair Heart and soul Dewey would himself have believed that the multiple sided result was an inevitable educational pattern

During the winter of 1887 88 Whitelaw Reid a member of the New York State Board of Regents asked the librarian of Columbia College to advise the Library Committee of the Regents regarding certain plans that the committee had under way at the time for the reorganization of the New York State Library this library being one of the state institutions under the Regents jurisdiction In accordance with this request Dewey went to Albany inspected the then new Capitol building and investigated the State Library situation

In characteristic Dewey fashion he went much farther The larger educational situation at Albany offered intriguing possibilities to a man of his imagination Governor Hill in his 1886 Message to the Legislature had to all intents and purposes called the Board of Regents a fifth wheel in the State s executive economy He had proposed that its functions (which had been roughly speaking the charge of the higher education of the State) be consolidated with those of the State Department of Public Instruction (which had been responsible for the State s *grade school education) He had said categorically*

I think there is no necessity for the official existence of the Board of Regents Its corporate name is deceptive and misleading Its powers and duties can be entrusted

to other and appropriate hands without detriment to the public interests, thereby saving to the state the annual expenses of its maintenance and dispensing with the anomaly of a two headed educational system and confusion—that of divided and sometimes conflicting superintendence in the same public school

During the two years that had intervened the legislature had taken no action on Governor Hill's recommendation, but the Regents naturally felt themselves on the defensive For two years, with their future politically uncertain, they had marked time When the energetic young librarian from Columbia came along and proposed for them a complete and plausible program for affirmative action, is it any wonder that they welcomed his suggestions with open arms?

Having canvassed not merely the library, but the whole State educational situation, Dewey wrote Whitelaw Reid, on November 25, 1888, a long letter, in which he outlined a program both for the State Library and for the Regents This letter is so characteristic, and reveals so fully Dewey the educator, that it deserves quotation at considerable length

In reply to your query what ought to be done by the Regents I beg to give a brief outline of some of the things that seem to me practicable and highly desirable I do not say that these plans are all formulated in the best way, or that local circumstances may not modify some of them I only say that I think I see clearly how the right man could carry these out to the great advantage of the state and at a cost so

moderate as to create no objection You will understand that I do not expect any man who undertakes this great work to set everything in motion at once I should say that he should apply to the work all the power & push that were consistent with these principles —

1 To be sure before taking any action that there was full & proper authority in the laws of the state so that no critic could say a progressive administration was taking the bits in its teeth & exceeding its proper functions & authority

2 To absolutely avoid all entangling alliances of politics so that neither party could possibly have excuse for partisan opposition

3 To maintain above possibility of criticism the dignity of the Regents of the University This would sometimes require a little patience Our own Board of Trustees at Columbia are very conservative & I have learned this in carrying some of my work forward faster than they could digest the new ideas

The following check list of things to be done does not profess to be exhaustive

1 Building Make your sixth (6th) of the $ 0 000 000 Capitol into ideal state library quarters as nearly as the limitations allow

2 Reorganization A complete reorganization of the methods as you move into these quarters is important Your library while first in size & value of all the state collections has by no means held the same rank as to its methods extent of use &c

3 Legislative Functions It should be made the very best working legislative library so that every officer of the state could with the least possible delay get any information or assistance to be had in print The smallness of the present use is astounding & only skilful work will

lead the average legislator, whose non-scholarly habits I fully appreciate, to become a frequenter & user of the library

4 STATE REPOSITORY It should be the best existing repository of everything pertaining to N Y state This side of its work has been better looked after than almost any other but much remains to be done

6 PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY This oft quoted phrase should be made a fact in your library To every citizen of the state this splendid collection in its splendid home, all paid for by the state, should be the real university "where any person may find information on any subject" This requires practically nothing but the disposition on the part of the management Books, rooms, & facilities are already provided

9 STATE SUPERVISION OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES the time has come when the state must recognize the work of the library, as more than a generation ago it recognized that of the schools This is the greatest work at once before you It will require time & skill but its doing will surely mark a new era in popular education One definite assistance is for you to have trained assistants on the state library staff, one of whom can be detailed for a week or a month to go to any town that may ask such help, & start a new library or reorganize an old one calls for such assistance are growing every month It will inevitably result that you will be constantly training, in connection with your library, a succession of your librarians & catalogers who will be called to take charge of the new libraries springing up on all sides Just as N Y has led all the states in meeting the demand for trained teachers by founding no less than ten normal schools, so you will be sure to have at least one center for training competent librarians, with-

out whom no satisfactory library progress is possible Fortunately this training can be so combined with your own library work as to impose a very slight financial burden

You will almost never find one man eminent as a specialist in any of these departments who at the same time has business training & natural gifts that will enable him properly to care for the financial & business details of the work

In my intense interest in this whole matter I have ventured to verify my own judgment by taking into confidence a few eminent educators Every man consulted has expressed to me his firm belief that this great work as outlined in this long letter is entirely practicable & that if carried through its influence will spread to every state of the Union

Obviously Dewey in this naïve but ingenious letter had clearly in mind that he was himself the right man to carry through for the Regents the program he had laid out for them he believed he had that combination of business training and natural gifts which he himself said was essential He did not merely set forth a plausible program at a most opportune time For good measure he suggested however indirectly that he was himself just the man to carry out the program The significant point is that the Regents agreed with him Convinced that he was exactly the man for the job they offered it to him and within a week he had definitely broken his relations with Columbia and had accepted their offer

In this manner began the first of the great diver

sions" that were to carry Dewey progressively farther and farther away from the library work with which his name will be forever connected, but one can easily appreciate the appeal that this new opening had for him He knew that his position at Columbia hung by a thread, and with it the position of the little new Library School for which he had worked so hard (That he had already planned to carry the School to Albany is obvious to anyone reading between the lines of the ingratiating ninth paragraph of his memorandum to the Regents) The new position offered him a fresh start and larger possibilities for usefulness It also offered him financial betterment, incidental though that may have been

A fresh professional start afforded Dewey a unique opportunity to profit by his Columbia experience Seeing clearly these Columbia mistakes, he could now avoid repeating them In his letter to Reid he had said as much not to carry on a program faster than his superiors could "digest his new ideas", "a progressive administration" must not seem to be "taking the bits in its teeth", it must leave no "excuse for partisan opposition", it must "maintain above possibility of criticism the dignity of the Regents" These phrases sound like the words of a chastened man swearing a whole set of new New Year's resolutions

But no more than a leopard can change his spots could Melvil Dewey change his disposition or restrain his enthusiasms He tried hard But his eleven years at Albany as secretary of the Board of Regents were in many

respects a replica of his five preceding years at Columbia Again and again he was in hot water—with his Regents with the legislature with the State s executive administration Governor Hill had reversed himself on his proposal to legislate the Board of Regents out of existence mainly because Dewey had been appointed their secretary and was promising a new deal for them a later governor proposed to abolish the Board of Regents largely to get rid of him and his new deal!

Nothing could be farther apart than the pro Dewey and the anti Dewey accounts of what Dawe in his biography calls the fighting years at Albany The pro Dewey accounts tell the story of a high minded and zealous servant of the state endeavoring to bring to consummation long overdue educational reforms in the face of every sort of underhanded political opposition and of every kind of venomous sordid scurrilous and utterly unjustified personal attack The picture drawn by the anti Deweyites is that of a man as shifty as a weather vane juggling legislative appropriations around to provide funds for pet reforms not only unauthorized but definitely forbidden ignoring established precedents without compunction and almost without reason and doing so in the face of official warning not to do so riding with a high hand over Regents and legislature alike untactful not willing to work in harness etc etc.

How much this sounds like Columbia all over again Obviously the truth must lie somewhere between these

two extremes One fact at least is undeniable whatever the cause, or whoever was to blame, Dewey, almost from the day he took over the Regents' secretaryship until he resigned eleven years later, was repeatedly in some sort of minor or major conflict When he finally went out, his enemies were, of course, exultant, but even his best friends on the Board of Regents accepted his final resignation with something like a sigh of relief Where so much smoke went up to Heaven there must have been some fire

Dewey was not politically wise enough to win himself "a good press" Phrases like "After Dewey's Scalp," "Charges Against Dewey," "Storm in the Board of Regents," run through the newspaper headings of the period To a considerable degree this last was perhaps not his fault Political fights usually make news, thousands of pages of research material of the greatest scientific value ordinarily do not Through such headline trivia as the "Dui–Dewey" controversy, Dewey's name was made known to thousands who never heard of him in any other way, who knew nothing about his constructive work, nothing about the hundreds of men and women whom he was sending out, imbued with his own eagerness and enthusiasm, to spread the gospel of librarianship to every corner of the world This was unfair to him, of course, but it was the fact

Just what was the fire that created all this smoke? The fundamental issue over which the battle raged all through his incumbency was not by any means one of

his own making It derived from the already mentioned bipartite nature of the State s educational system and the ever simmering struggle for control that went on between the two halves Dr Andrew S Draper Superintendent of Public Instruction at Albany from 1886 to 1892 and so in a sense Dewey s rival for educational power and prestige was also aggressive an able administrator and just as strong a personality as Dewey himself This dual educational system with its co equal administration was as Governor Hill had said anomalous and only men of unusual tact and a strong cooperative sense could have made it work harmoniously As neither Dewey nor Draper was marked for his tact they clashed from the start Each accused the other of poaching on his preserves of grasping for more power The first round of the battle Dewey won for the Regents Draper resigned and took another position

If this conflict of educational authority was the fundamental issue there were scores of subsidiary ones most of them absurdly trivial—so trivial in fact that in all the eleven years of Regents meeting minutes only two of them were even dignified with official reference It was in these minor daily routine matters that Dewey was everlastingly getting into hot water in such things for instance as his almost continuous controversy with the accounting officers of the State The trouble here was largely that consummate rationalizing ability that dogged him all his life the idea that if something was right and wise he must somehow find a way to do

it—and, moreover, to do it at once—however financially circumlocutional, or technically unauthorized, or tactlessly forced, the way that he chose might be. Almost always the ends that he wanted to accomplish *were* wholly desirable ones. But he never learned that even desirable ends must sometimes be postponed, never learned the patience that he had himself said was essential, never learned the virtue of consistent and unvarying straightforwardness, never learned how "to speak softly" in the presence of political opposition.

Dewey realized the pitfalls that surround the handling of official finances and set out to avoid them. Soon after his appointment, on December 10, 1889, we find the Finance Committee of the Regents approving "the new method of classification of accounts adopted by the Secretary" and "heartily" endorsing the "suggested rules governing financial administration submitted to the Committee by him." But in due course Dewey found, as every government official does, that the very rigidity of bureaucratic accounting practice is to some extent self-defeating, that emergencies sometimes arise almost demanding temporary abrogations of established practice in some minor particular. Such temporary abrogations, if conscientiously undertaken for reasons that are clearly in the public interest, if openly done, *and if rarely done,* are easily defendable. Trouble develops when these three "ifs" are ignored—particularly the last!

But juggling with figures—and not using the word "juggling" here with any derogatory connotation—became

in time almost a passion with Dewey He became fascinated with them he liked to play with them Over the years also partly as a result of the ingrained thrift of his boyhood partly as a result of years of propagandizing with the leanest of funds he developed to a high degree the art of skating on thin financial ice But consummate adroitness in keeping a half dozen balls in the air at once may be entirely pardonable and even praiseworthy when dealing with personal funds but open to easy criticism when handling official funds The charge of personal venality was as a matter of fact several times brought against Dewey during his Albany years It is significant of the utter lack of foundation behind these charges that not even a passing reference to this sort of attack on Dewey appears anywhere in the official minutes of the Regents And always when such charges were brought or even insinuated Dewey promptly demanded investigation and always they were completely disproved Here for example is a part of the report of one joint subcommittee of the State Senate and Assembly made in 1895

> It was charged by the said newspaper *The State* that Secretary Dewey had committed offenses derogatory to his office in specified particulars Witnesses were summoned *before the committee to testify* It will clearly appear that not a single charge involving the integrity and official conduct of the accused was sustained In weighing all the testimony taken and that could be obtained from witnesses produced no other result could be reached by the committee than that the charges

were not only not sustained, but that by the means and spirit in which they were brought and persistently prosecuted, they were vexatious, frivolous and detrimental to public interests

So far as personal venality was concerned, the facts were quite the contrary In 1899 an official of the Library Bureau wrote to an official in Albany a letter regarding supplies, one sentence of which is significant "You know Mr Dewey leans backward a bit in his desire to be perfectly straight as to letting Library Bureau, directly or indirectly, get any business of the State Library, Albany" Equally scrupulous was Dewey's hatred of nepotism In a letter written by James Russell Parsons, Jr, in 1894, to the *Albany Evening Journal,* in answer to a critical comment in that paper, he says

Mr Gallup received an appointment in the regents' office before marriage to Mr Dewey's niece, during Mr Dewey's absence in Europe and contrary to his expressed wishes This connection by marriage has retarded his advancement If the regents and other friends had not recognized Mr Gallup's exceptional administrative abilities he would either have resigned long ago for a wider field, or still be working for a ridiculously small salary in comparison with his deserts

Nevertheless, as all experienced politicians know, but as Dewey himself did not seem to realize, charges of this sort—no matter how "dirty" their origin, how completely unfounded, or how thoroughly disproved—*if they are repeated often enough* and uttered emphatically enough

come finally to leave a certain amount of ineradicable impress

It sometimes seemed however as though Dewey went out of his way to develop new frictions where none had before existed (Buying bicycles wholesale for his office staff raised one controversy A tempest in a teapot over his insistence for a while on spelling his name Dui was another typical example) It was these utterly trivial things that kept him a storm center and they really did handicap him Much of the useful and efficient educational work that he did for the State came to nothing and much that he might have accomplished remained undone—all to a large degree because of these defects of personal temperament This was the more unfortunate because he did so much that was excellent progressive and constructive Just before he started at Albany Henry Barnard then United States Commissioner of Education had written him Your intense earnestness and power of work and of getting willing work out of others will be an inspiration Even if nothing new should be at once attempted your way of doing things will be a new era You can t help introducing a progressive element In other words he began under the best of auspices

His first great constructive work was that of putting through the legislature in 1889 an act recodifying and consolidating so much of the educational laws of the State as related to the powers and duties of the Board of Regents This was followed up in 1890 by a new com

prehensive University Law, a law that was referred to, at a later convocation of the Regents, as

> a model of condensed, accurate expression, of wise, statesmanlike, educational legislation, so comprehensive in its sweep and far-reaching in its provisions that any commonwealth might be proud to possess such a compendium of school law It is an interesting comment on the fairness of this bill and the thoroughness with which it was prepared that it did not receive a single amendment and passed unanimously in the senate, and with scarcely a dissenting vote in the assembly

All through his eleven Albany years, Dewey carried through a vast amount of other more or less routine work of this sort, work that does not lend itself to dramatization, but, as a whole, constituting an imposing record of solid accomplishment Reports, bulletins, and circulars, etc, rolled out in a flood He revitalized all the Regents' old departments and divisions, and established numerous new ones This work may be called "routine," but we must remember that much of it became routine only after Dewey had inaugurated it For he was continually striking out into some new field of educational endeavor The aggressive fertility of his restless mind was astonishing, but no less astonishing was the unremitting energy by means of which he drove through the detail that made his dreams become actualities In these eleven years it is no exaggeration to say that he completely transformed the work of the Office of the Board of Regents In this cumulative mass of educational accomplishment

he did the work of a dozen men and did most of it well

Take the annual educational Convocations of the Regents as an example Dewey did not actually originate them but they had so long been a dead letter that to all intents and purposes he did That he was successful in his revivification of them is evident Chancellor Upson in 1894 said We are all very much indebted to you for the success of the Convocation Without your tact and industry and energy and enthusiasm it would be a fail ure It is good and noble work that you are doing in this and all the rest of it Hamilton Wright Mabie at the time a trustee of Barnard College commented

> The Convocation was a tremendous success thanks to the electrical battery which you somewhere conceal about your person I do not think I ever saw so many first class men together in an educational assemblage and every thing was so harmonious and genial You are to be con gratulated and you have a capital instrument for thor oughly practical educational work In the Convocation I saw its possibilities for the first time

Obviously the Regents Convocations were the 1876 meeting of librarians all over again in a different field

His successor as secretary of the Board of Regents James Russell Parsons in his preface to a printed com pilation of the Regents minutes for the decade 1889 99 remarked that the period of Dewey s secretaryship was the period in which the University came to be recognized as one of the most effective educational organizations in

the United States" In their own formal resolutions, when they accepted his resignation as their secretary, the Regents themselves said

> The board recognize in Mr Dewey an organizer of genius, an executive of great skill, an educational leader of marked originality and energy, and an officer whose administration has coincided with the largely augmented usefulness and honor of the University
>
> we record with gratitude his zeal for the welfare of the service of the state, his devotion to the interests and good fame of the board and his constant sympathy with the cause and institutions of higher education in the commonwealth and in the nation, and that we rejoice to believe that his rare gifts and abilities will still be at the service of the University in a field congenial to his wishes and commensurate with his extraordinary qualities
>
> the board accepts his resignation with renewed expression of its regret, and of its high regard and esteem for its secretary and its friend

These are obviously not forced or perfunctory phrases There is here no damning with faint praise, but rather a sincere tribute to great service rendered

In accepting his resignation as its secretary, it is perhaps neither unfair nor an overstatement to assert that the Board threw Dewey to the wolves as a sort of "appeasement" gesture The educational "unification" pot was at the moment boiling furiously again, and the life of the Regents themselves was again at stake At the very meeting (December 22, 1899) at which Dewey resigned

as secretary the Regents voted upon three alternative and contradictory resolutions defining their official attitude toward unification and so relating to their own future (That their votes upon all three resolutions were widely split shows clearly their own lack of unanimity of opinion) Furthermore if we are to accept the official record Dewey himself took the initiative in the appeasement gesture He is quoted thus

I agree with Superintendent Skinner that vastly more harm is being done to education by the heated discussions misunderstandings and misrepresentations now so rife than by all the friction between the two departments No personal sacrifice would be too great to secure harmony and peace among the educational workers of the state and I am more than willing to withdraw my own personality from the discussion

His later statement to the Regents actually offering his resignation is as interesting for its form as it is significant for its subject matter A comparison of its phraseology with that which he had used eleven years before in his statement to them in 1889 shows how much of the vocabulary and technique of educational and political method he had acquired during his secretaryship of the Board

As to the agitation about unification I opposed promptly and strongly the inclusion of the University law in the revised education law when it was proposed in 1896 because the University was doing admirable work under its own law It was the proposal to transfer the 503

high schools from the regents to the elementary school department which brought about the present differences

> It has been persistently suggested in various quarters that I had fomented this discussion about unification to the end that my jurisdiction as secretary should cover the elementary schools of the state In fact I have never seen one minute in which I wished such power
>
> I have profound respect and admiration for the common school work without the slightest desire to engage in it Twenty-seven years ago I chose as my career that part of education which centers in the public library

Dewey's resignation was accepted The wolves *were* appeased, and the Regents saved Unification agitation, for a second time, died down

In accordance with his own suggestion, Dewey, although he had resigned as the Board's Secretary, continued on as State Librarian and Director of the Library School But, five years later, in 1904, the legislature at last passed an educational "Unification Act," bringing all the educational activities of the State under one administrative head, and Draper was recalled from the University of Illinois to be that head For Dewey this was the beginning of the end The two men were incompatible Both probably realized that one department wasn't big enough to hold two such personalities That Draper, when he returned to Albany with full power, deliberately set about to oust Dewey is probably not the fact, but that he was entirely fair to him may equally

be doubted He probably preferred not to have him around he had the unquestionable right to select his own subordinates and when aggressive action developed from a new angle to force Dewey s retirement from all State office he did not oppose it

This new attack to which Dewey proved vulnerable had as is often the case with political attacks nothing whatever to do with either his personal probity or his professional services to the State It hinged upon the Lake Placid Club (of which more in the next chapter) which Dewey had started a few years before and which was at the time growing rapidly

At first it took the form of the accusation that the work of the Club was diverting him from his service to the State Library but this particular charge was pretty completely quashed by a considerable body of testimony including the following indignant letter dated February 9 1905 from Herbert Putnam Librarian of Congress

The petition now before your Board of Regents asking the removal from office of your State Librarian rests upon incidents with which in themselves we other librarians have no concern and as to which we are not entitled to speak but one charge is from time to time reiterated that he spends a considerable part of each year away from his office

Now to those of us who know Mr Dewey professionally such a charge is as ridiculous as its motive appears to be contemptible Mr Dewey eats drinks sleeps and talks library and library work throughout the twenty four hours the week the month and the year His phys

ical whereabouts at any one time is immaterial He is the clearest example in our profession of a man who can not shake off his business

There is no man living today to whom more than to him is due the prodigious activity of the past quarter of a century in the promotion of libraries, and in the diffusion of interest in them There is no one who has done more to stir with enthusiasm for practical library service competent people who are needed in it His name is more widely known abroad than that of any other living American librarian, for his contributions to library technique and to the general acceptance of public libraries as a motive force in popular education

Putnam's courageous defense was unavailing, for this claim that Dewey was giving an undue proportion of his personal time to the work of the Club was really only a smoke screen The real issue at stake was something very different The Club had, from its beginning, excluded Jews from its membership Dewey might—and did—point out that, as a private club, it had a perfect legal right to do this, he might claim that the Club's rules were made by its Council, of which Council he was personally not even a member, he might assert that, although he held a controlling interest in the Lake Placid *Company,* this corporation's relations with the Lake Placid *Club* were contractual only Nevertheless it was no more possible for him to disassociate himself from all responsibility for this Jewish exclusion rule than it was for Stalin to disclaim all responsibility for the acts of the Comintern A Jewish group, headed by several

important figures petitioned the Regents for Dewey s resignation

The bitter racial flavor which this petition added to the previous attacks proved potent Since Dewey s original appointment the personnel of the Regents themselves had greatly changed Heretofore they had always supported him In all their minutes there had previously occurred only a single instance of official criticism of any of his acts (In this one case the matter of the New York Preparatory School that criticism had been minor—solely that he had written for them a minute which seriously erred on the score of good taste fairness and propriety And even in this case Dewey had promptly countered by showing that the minute in question had been submitted to the Regents for approval and had been discussed and amended by them!) This new accusation against Dewey together with the political weight behind it was something the Regents felt they could not ignore

Dewey was heard—at length—in his own defense But one reads between the lines of testimony his realization that he was on the way out Beside the Jewish question other personal attacks were being made at this particular time attacks even harder for him to combat Although he did not lack friends they were becoming a little weary of coming to his defense so endless a process had it become He had antagonized too many people The petition to the Board served to bring all the smoldering opposition to him to a focus The Board of Regents after

prolonged discussion" on February 15, 1905 unanimously "censures the publication by an officer of the Education Department of the anti-Semitic expressions complained of communicates the formal and severe rebuke of the Board and admonishes the Director that the further control of a private business which continues to be conducted on such lines is incompatible with the legitimate requirements of his position "

This action of the Regents, nominally at least, left actual decision as to his future to Dewey The choice offered was a hard one to leave the library work to which he had devoted the best part of his life, or to give up the Club which he had come to love It took him six months to make the decision On September 21, 1905 he resigned as State Librarian and Director of the Library School

XI

THE DIVERSIONS—
THE CLUB

As a Dewey diversion the Lake Placid Club comes in a little different category from either his secretaryship of the Board of Regents or his two reforms For one thing it was a much greater diversion for another it was a diversion in both meanings of the word

Lake Placid was actually discovered by Miss Lydia B Godfrey Mrs Dewey s sister (and her successor as librarian at Wellesley) She built a cabin on the hill overlooking Mirror Lake near the spot that she was to occupy in summer thereafter for nearly forty years and invited the Deweys to visit her there They found Lake Placid s climate and scenery so delightful and the immunity it offered from the hay fever from which they both suffered so complete that a year later they became her near neighbors Dewey had had in mind for several years the idea of starting a cooperative vacation club resort Next to Miss Godfrey's cabin on the edge of Mirror Lake was a little run down north woods hotel This ramshackle building he bought It became the nucleus of the Lake Placid Club

The preliminary announcements of the proposed club were sent out by Dewey in 1893 Among those whom he

first circularized were several men who became lifelong members. William B Howland of the *Outlook* magazine, the Rev Lyman Abbott and Hamilton Wright Mabie In his circular he told them he felt that the Lake Placid country offered the setting for an ideal summer resort, and he added "We are intensely interested in getting for neighbors people whom of all others we would prefer" So the Club was started, running its first year in conventional club fashion, cooperatively owned and cooperatively administered

This first year was a troublous one As always, Dewey had very definite and positive ideas as to its future and management, not all the other members agreed with him There were also financial difficulties Few of the first members had any idea of making any substantial investment in a club The inevitable happened Dewey's energy carried the day, and the dissenters dropped out He was ready to raise money, and did, and he who pays the piper always calls the tune Someone *has* to call it Committees and boards may be able to carry on enterprises already established, but no embryonic business enterprise grows to success from nothing unless some one man is enthusiastic enough, and able enough, to carry the burden and responsibility of its direction So far as the Club was concerned Dewey was both enthusiastic and able Very soon, therefore, although the outward forms of club-hood were preserved, the Club ceased to be an ordinary one in the accepted sense and instead became a very special sort of proprietary enterprise, of which

Dewey was so far as actual practice was concerned the absolute dictator

Of all his rationalizations the Club was in many respects the *ne plus ultra* He referred to it not as a summer resort club but as a university in the woods To him it was not a business but a great semiphilanthropic institution He assured himself as he assured others that its growth had not been fortuitous and gradual but that it had been planned *in toto* by its founder on that happy day when first his eyes rested on the Adirondack s Mount Marcy Consistently he stated that it was not a one man enterprise but an entirely cooperative venture owned controlled and managed by a self selected group of congenial spirits Furthermore for every one of these happy conclusions he carefully provided duly citable proof by specific chapter and verse

Ignoring all these tenuous rationalizations two extremely solid and vitally important facts still remain First the Club from its very beginning did have an institutional character all its own a social atmosphere and a type of patronage utterly different from those of any other summer resort a character that did make it unique second this character and atmosphere were almost wholly the result of the Dewey impress The Club s acceptance of simplicity in dress and in its architecture and furnishings its lavish provision for wholesome sports and amusements the sustained enthusiasm that perpetuated for years such distinctive Club customs

as Float Night, the Indian Council Fire, the Yule Log Festival, etc , its stubborn endeavor to eliminate drinking, its careful choice of its employees and the type of them, its very largely successful attempt to abolish tipping, the constant endeavor to look after the welfare of the children of Club guests, the continual emphasis on health and safety, behind the scenes, as well as in sight, the consistent endeavor to give the Club the best in music—all these characteristics (and many others) were primarily the result of Dewey's own personality and insistence They made the Club "the Club," and they helped to make it the altogether delightful vacation resort that it was

The great growth of the Club began in 1905, when Dewey for the first time made it his main interest and all-year-round place of residence Those who were with him then realized that at last the burden of work he had carried uncomplainingly for so many years was beginning to tell on him His hay fever was becoming an ever more aggressive affliction He had come to love the Adirondack country Thanks largely to the devoted and tactful work of Asa O Gallup, then and for many years thereafter its manager, the Club was at the time growing rapidly When he left Albany, Lake Placid must have beckoned to Dewey like some green field where he could kick up his heels in relief

But "M D," whether at Columbia or Boston, at Albany or Lake Placid, was not of the relaxing type Once he was installed at Lake Placid the year round,

his latent energies went into high gear again The result was the phenomenal development of what in the course of the next two decades became not merely a great vaca tion resort but an internationally known institution One says institution deliberately for when the stage the press and the public at large come to use the phrase Lake Placid in an acquired or secondary sense just as they have come to give secondary meanings to such other geographic names as Hollywood Palm Beach and Monte Carlo one can justly say that a real institution has been created In thirty years the Club increased its assets its membership its annual income and its amaz ing offering of entertainment perhaps tenfold

For exactly how much of this growth Dewey himself was personally responsible it is hard to say Certainly his was the vision that saw farther and faster than any of his Club associates his was the financial adroitness that kept the huge complex alive making it function in all its complexity and yet proliferate continually at the same time like some sort of business amoeba It is true that as with the Library School he gathered about him a long line of able associates In the early—and critical—days there was Gallup a host in himself Miss Grace Godfrey who carried the Club technically speaking through its adolescent growing pains Mrs Dewey the only one ever able to curb his exuberant desire to ex pand Gallup s successor Harry W Hicks and of course many others But the driving energy that insisted on forging ahead was always M D s—and his alone

Always his associates cried that he was going too far too fast, always—so long as he lived—he was able to prove them wrong

Nothing was more characteristically "Dewey-esque" than the Club's opening in winter. It had started as a summer resort, and opened its full facilities all winter for the first time in 1906-7 Those who were there then well remember the dire prophecies of financial disaster which Dewey, in a minority of one, ignored, insisting that the Club could, should and would become a great winter as well as a great summer resort Twenty years later, when the Club had become the "St Moritz of America," was housing the international Winter Olympics, and had a larger "house count" in winter than, in 1906-7, it had had in summer, he could well afford an "I told you so"

On the other hand, it was also amusing, this same twenty years later, to remember the thousand reasons that Dewey had had, in 1906-7, to prove beyond the shadow of question that the only possible desirable winter vacation for anyone had to be taken amid the ice and snows of Placid, and that Florida in winter was altogether the most debilitating, enervating and unhealthful section of the world imaginable For, two decades later, the Club had set up a winter branch of its own in Florida, and, with Dewey himself a winter resident there, an amazing change in Florida's climate had occurred It had become as perfect—if different—as that of Lake Placid itself!

At the time of Dewey s death the Club had become not only the largest residential club in the world but probably also the largest vacation resort of any sort. It housed its guests in a half dozen or more independently functioning clubhouses and scores of separate cottages Most of these were in the main Club plexus on the north side of Mirror Lake (like the village of Lake Placid the Club is not located on Lake Placid itself but on the smaller neighboring lake) but one the famous Adirondack Lodge lay at the foot of Mt Marcy twelve miles south one on Cascade Lake was still farther away and one was at another Lake Placid in central Florida (For a time the Club had operated still an other clubhouse on Long Island Sound in Connecticut but this had been discontinued)

But the Lake Placid Club was and is much more than an all year round club hotel It is a self-contained com munity requiring for its operation scores of subsidiary buildings There is a correlative system of clubhouses and cottages to house its hundreds of employees of all classes There are a dozen club farms raising all sorts of food for sale as well as for Club consumption dairy farms poultry farms vegetable farms etc. The Club has its own laundries cold storage plants warehouses sawmills and lumberyards its own carpenter painting plumbing and sport-equipment shops It has of course a whole system of riding stables and garages of retail shops stores and booths and of tearooms and lunch counters quite aside from the various regular clubhouse

dining rooms It has its own chapel, motion-picture theater, and orchestras, its own post, telegraph, express, and railroad-ticket offices It owns many thousands of acres of land, and maintains five golf courses and hundreds of miles of private roads, bridle paths and trails Its total assets run up into the millions

Such a complex organism as this could not have grown up in a night As a matter of fact it was the development of many years, but all of it is the tangible projection of the vision and enthusiasm of the man who created it We have called the Club an institution It is It is easy to belittle it, to call it "just another summer resort," to refer to it as though it were the mess of pottage for which Dewey gave up the best years of his life, years during which he might have done much more for librarianship But it is altogether possible that this sort of criticism is just neither to the Club nor to him The Club was, and is, much more than just another summer resort Many thousands of people came to love it It had a very definite and real influence on resort life and its development all over the United States It had its little Dewey grotesqueries, but these were part of its individuality

In 1922 the Deweys had had chartered by the Regents of the State of New York the Lake Placid Club Education Foundation To it they turned over their entire common stock (controlling interest) in the Lake Placid Company, the holding corporation for the Lake Placid Club This foundation was to be wholly a philanthropic

institution using the income received on its holdings of Club securities to further the welfare of librarians and other educational folk (who had always been extended special courtesies at the Club) and those seed sowing activities—spelling reform metric reform and the like—so dear to Dewey's heart Unfortunately the depression caught the Club in a greatly over extended position—its habitual position With Dewey at the financial helm it had weathered dozens of storms had he been still alive his daring and adroitness might have pulled it through even the trials of 1929 39 The Club passed into a sort of not unfriendly receivership and was eventually reorganized a process not completed until 1943 The reorganization was carefully done It left the Club physically at least substantially intact

XII

THE DIVERSIONS—THE REFORMS

DEWEY'S INTEREST in spelling reform went back at least to his Alfred days It incubated and grew at Amherst, as his diary evidences By 1875 the American Philological Association had become sufficiently interested in the matter to appoint a representative committee (such men as March of Lafayette, Whitney of Yale and Child of Harvard) to consider and report on the possibility of reforming our chaotic spelling This committee made a number of "reports," which, in general, received the endorsement of the Association

Meanwhile, in August, 1876, an International Convention for the Amendment of English Orthography was held at Philadelphia "to settle upon some satisfactory plan of labor for the prosecution of the work so happily begun by the American Philological Association and various other educational associations in this country and England" To this centennial conference came the same fiery young enthusiast from New England who, the same year, journeyed thither to help launch an American library association From it emerged the Spelling Reform Association, of which, although he was not even a philologist, Dewey was destined, for

nearly sixty years to be the secretary and dynamo The National Education Association formally endorsed the new movement in 1898 by adopting what was then its shibboleth the so-called 'Twelve Words and again in 1916 when it approved the substitution of t for ed in past participles so pronounced In 1906 when Andrew Carnegie offered the movement his financial backing and the Simplified Spelling Board was organized the success of the movement seemed almost in the offing

Why then did it collapse? Why is spelling reform temporarily more nearly a dead issue than any in the whole category of Dewey reforms? The eventual historian of the movement will probably record that it was killed not by its enemies but by its friends and killed by them because they relied too much on argument and failed to pay adequate heed or indeed any heed whatever to human psychology Argument? No one was ever yet able to advance even one sound *argument* against the simplification of our English spelling it *is* absurd time wasting brain addling anachronistic inconsistent derivatively misleading confusing—every other one of the hard names that Dewey and his confrères called it

But any attempt to alter spelling runs up against one of the strangest and strongest of all human emotions—prejudice The job of spelling simplification is primarily one not for the philologist but for the psychologist that is—to put it very bluntly—for very high-grade advertising experts Stubborn insistence on change however

well meant and well argued, is always in danger of being met—as it was met in the case of simplified spelling—by even more stubborn resistance to change When it comes to ridicule, the spelling reformer uses a dangerous weapon, for ridicule was exactly what the more extreme of the advocates for simplified spelling, including Dewey himself, let themselves in for

Canny Andrew Carnegie saw the simplified spelling problem far more clearly than did the philological experts who were in charge of its solution for him In April, 1903, he wrote

> I attach more importance to getting right on the ten most awkward words than I do to any general or wide scheme that can be suggested I want some practical result for my money, to begin with I should consider the success in the general adoption of the change in those ten words worth Ten Thousand Dollars a year for ten years, and would not consider more talk worth One Dollar

And a year later he wrote "I have made up my mind that reform in spelling can come only by degrees"

All his life, with Carnegie money or without it, Melvil Dewey carried on the campaign for simplified spelling, carried it on in the face of ridicule, under criticism, amid rebuff of every sort, and at heavy personal cost of time and money His insistence on it tended to alienate some of his best friends, it definitely hurt the Club, yet he never wavered or retreated or compromised by so much as a single inch Admirable? Yes A splendid

measure of the amazing moral courage and intellectual integrity of the man Yet if one is to be strictly and wholly honest in ones judgments one will probably have to admit that Deweys uncompromising indeed almost fanatical devotion to the cause of simplified spelling probably hurt that cause more than it helped

Simplified spelling in English will come in time—just as it has already come in Portuguese in Danish and in several other languages that needed it far less It will come because the arguments favoring it are in fact irrefutable Everything that Dewey claimed for it *is* true It *will* save months of every childs school life Just as Carnegie believed our present terrible spelling *is* one of the chief barriers to the wider use of English as the international language and so in turn a barrier to world peace If only Dewey could have been a little more patient a little more willing to make haste slowly!

Deweys interest in metric reform followed very closely the spelling reform pattern In 1931 he gave this characteristic story of his conversion to the cause (all his own spellings being in this case retained)

> In skool in Adams Center I rebeld agenst compound numbers I told the teacher that jeometri taut us a strait lyn was the shortest distance between 2 points & that it was absurd to hav long mezur surveyors mezur & cloth mezur also absurd to hav quarts & bushels of diferent syzes & to hav avoirdupois troy & apothecari weits with a pound of feathers hevier than a pound of gold I spred out on my attik room table sheets of foolscap & desyded that the world needed just 1 mezur

for length, 1 for capasiti & 1 for weit, & that they should all be in simpl decimals lyk our muni

I was puzzling over the names to giv the new mezures when I red that Senator John A Kasson of Iowa had past in Congress a bil legalizing the metrik sistem I lookt it up at once, found that it met my plan ideali, & the next week went to our vilaj lyceum & gave a talk on the great merit of international weits & mezures From that day I became a metrik apostl

At Alfred and Amherst metric reform lay dormant for a while in Dewey's mind, but soon after reaching Boston he chartered the American Metric Bureau, and started, almost single-handed, to propagandize for the new faith As usual, he let others take the glory while he took the work He had himself elected secretary, and carried all the expense Metric reform developed no Andrew Carnegie for itself, perhaps fortunately, for, if progress was perforce slower, it was sounder Although Dewey never lost interest in it, other and more pressing duties in time forced it out of the immediate orbit of his activity

There is, of course, almost as little sound *argument* against metric reform as against spelling reform It is, again, basically, almost wholly a question of prejudice If one analyzes this popular anti-metric prejudice a bit, it will be found that it is really not against a decimal system of weights and measures as such, but almost wholly against the imported nomenclature in which the international system arrays itself The simplicity of decimal calculation of itself readily wins popular ac-

ceptance (as witness our American currency) it is rather the foreign names given the metric units that rouse American antagonism Perhaps some day our metric reform advocates will realize this and will see that after all *names* are relatively unimportant If for instance our yard were officially made a meter long and our mile were made 1000 of these yards long instead of 1760 if our gallon were officially made the exact equivalent of a liter if we made our inch a decimeter long and so had 100 inches in our yard instead of 36 if in other words most of our *names* were retained but were applied to their nearest metric equivalents it is altogether likely that the metric system could be put over in this country in very short order and put over just as painlessly and unconsciously as was the anomaly known as daylight saving Names *are* not important the important thing is to decimalize our present chaotic system of weights and measures and at the same time to bring it into conformity with the international system Americans are used to pounds and they would get used to a pound weighing a kilo gram much sooner than they would get used to a kilogram Of course this is prejudice Of course it is silly But it is also a fact to be reckoned with

As to how much the library profession lost because of Dewey s premature retirement from it—for he virtually did retire from it when he left Albany in 1906—no one can say It is not impossible that his library lifework was then done He had made his great contributions

perhaps they were all he had to give. Of course he could have lingered on as an elder statesman, preaching the fervent gospel of library service to a new generation. On the other hand, perhaps, with the passing of years and changing conditions, that gospel would have lost something of its initial effectiveness. Library science in 1906 was no longer the simple thing it had been back in 1876 in the days of the pioneers; it was, on the contrary, very rapidly becoming an extremely complex corpus of experience. Even in his later years at Albany, "M. D." had, to some extent, lost touch with its newer minutiae. Although no one could reasonably assert that he had a one-track mind, it is true that all his library tracks pointed unswervingly in the same general direction.

And yet—one remembers the wealth of his knowledge of library practice and the strength of his insistence upon taking the intensely practical approach to every library problem. One remembers—most important of all—his kindly personal interest in young librarians, the vibrant magnetism of his personality, his unflinching professional courage, and the unswerving faith with which he believed in the mission and future of libraries. One remembers these—and wishes that there might have been no "diversions!"

XIII

THE PERSONALITY OF THE MAN

In the preceding pages there has been built up what may seem in many respects to be an extremely puzzling picture Its apparent inconsistencies are an inevitable part of it for Melvil Dewey was a complex of contradictions

This was true both in trivial things and in great ones At the Club—for an instance of the former—he was keenly interested in providing opportunities for competitive outdoor sports for others and did so lavishly but he never took part in them himself He could not play any musical instrument nor sing yet he had a genuine love for good music. All his life his first interest was in books he lived ate drank and slept books But that interest extended only to their contents for the shell that held those contents for beautiful printing and fine binding he had not the remotest concern

Although he was a professed miser of time he wasted it prodigiously—his own and that of his friends—in his efforts to save it A lifelong preacher of careful conservation and of the closest sort of thrift he was in some of his financial matters an outstanding exemplar of the most prodigal recklessness Thoughtful for others to

an unusual degree, he was, in other of his dealings, utterly cold and tactless Finally, although inherently kindly in disposition, continually doing all sorts of nice things for all sorts of people, although all his life he was actuated by what he honestly thought to be the highest of motives, he nevertheless could at times do things that even his best friends found it difficult either to explain or condone

These inherent character contradictions were all part of Dewey What of him physically? He was tall and powerfully built He was obliged to wear glasses constantly There glinted behind them two piercing dark eyes, generally characteristically puckered in either a smile or absorption of thought His outstanding physical attribute was his obvious nervous energy To this every reminiscence of him refers On a few occasions (listening to music was one) it was possible for him to keep still, but, when he did move, he could not move slowly A fellow student of his Amherst days says "I remember him as a tall active man of rather high nervous temperament" Twenty years later, Georgia Benedict, then a schoolgirl at Albany, gives the following impression of him She had wanted to take a book from the State Library, and, she writes

My request was referred to the Director, and I was ushered into an office where a black-haired, black-bearded, black-eyed gentleman in a pepper-and-salt suit was working away with a kind of furious quiet at a big desk I was struck by the speed and accuracy of his

movements It was like watching a fine machine an electric machine—the air about him was vibrant with energy His decisiveness the sparkling darkness of his face (dominated by his vivid eyes) his intense energy impressed me deeply Indeed I was a little awed and am still in recollection I had come into contact with an immense force too briefly to feel that force as personal and kindly only as strong

These were a little girl s impressions but she saw keenly and described truly It would be difficult to write in so few words a more accurate description of the impression that Dewey s personality made upon those whom he met You might like the man or you might not generally you did But whether you liked him or not your feeling about him tended to be intense and you received the definite impression that you had met an unusual personal force

Although Dewey was physically well built he was all his life vulnerable to the attacks of all sorts of minor ailments—coughs colds digestive upsets—and particularly in its season to hay fever As a boy he seems to have been rugged enough but by the time he had reached college he had begun to abuse the machine to abuse it not by dissipation but by overwork In 1868 he records in his diary Dr Potter examined me thoroughly and told Charlie privately I would not live two years Six years later in a letter to his brother he says I feel the lack of tone and fire I would wear a ragged coat and live in a garret if I could have my old

strength and health" In 1875 he had a serious attack of typhoid fever which he himself says "barely left me alive" His Amherst horseback riding perhaps really did save his life He continued it for years, Mrs Dewey, who was a good horsewoman, often accompanied him

By the time he left Albany he had at least found out what was the matter with him "I seem," he writes, "to be getting the better of my bad stomach, which I think was simply due to nervous exhaustion and overwork" (which was undoubtedly the fact) Constant fighting—and it is no exaggeration to say that Dewey was always fighting someone—will eventually wear out even the hardiest of digestive apparatuses and the strongest of nerves

A good deal of his apparent lack of tact was undoubtedly the result of sheer nervous exhaustion Only a harried man would so far forget himself as to write to one of his own Regents "When you come in my office we waste two hours in talk over matters that could be disposed of in two minutes if you would only form the habit of writing down what you want me to consider and sending it to me by mail." Fortunately, this particular Regent was too well poised himself to take offense His reply in this case was that it was Dewey himself who did most of the talking—probably the fact! In any event, over the years, Dewey wore himself out, and it is altogether probable that only his withdrawal to the fine air and relative peace of Lake Placid saved him from a complete breakdown

He boasted that he never worried and perhaps he never did—consciously But responsibility of any sort has a way of getting under our physical and mental skins surreptitiously He would have said that what saved him was his not drinking or smoking in fact he never drank even tea or coffee Relatively speaking he was a small eater and a long sleeper and these habits also undoubtedly helped him carry his inordinate load Mrs Dewey did what she could to protect him and in time he came to listen to her—a little That he lived to be eighty he owed largely to her

His enthusiasm cropped up in everything he did He was content to do nothing by halves If something was good it was very very good Bicycles came into vogue while he was at Albany Abruptly his many years of horseback riding were renounced for the new mechanical steed After a week he writes I realized that a new world was opening to me and as the months pass the priceless value of the new exercise has steadily increased in my estimation It has done more for my health and pleasure than the best of the fifteen saddle horses I have owned and at one twentieth the cost If bicycles were a good thing Dewey reasoned that everyone should have one So he became forthwith an ardent propagandist for bicycle riding He urged all his staff to ride he arranged to buy bicycles for them at wholesale installment payment rates he built them a bicycle shelter in his own Madison Avenue yard and special racks for bicycles at the State Library (He even

managed, as we have remarked, to get into a fight with the State authorities over them!)

If, by 1906, when he left Albany, the bicycle craze was long since gone and forgotten, it was only because he had acquired a new enthusiasm, the just-coming-into-use automobile On it he lavished all the enthusiasm that he had given in turn to horses and to bicycles While he and Biscoe were in Europe together in 1891 it is recorded that they bought a tandem! (Even as late as 1906, however, he was keeping one pair of fine horses—of which he characteristically offered the free use to those of his library-school students able to drive them)

As with bicycles, so with fountain pens Most of us are content to carry one But, if fountain pens are a good thing—and Dewey passionately believed that they were—why carry only one? He himself habitually carried a row of five, each one filled with a different colored ink, and he had on his desk a whole battery of others, of assorted shapes and sizes, each one adapted—or so he persuaded himself—to meet some special purpose

To him half-way endorsements of anything, in fact all shades and shadows of approbation, were compromises, and he hated compromise In the earlier days of the Club—to take another minor example—electricity was expensive, and all its buildings were lighted by acetylene But this was not at all because it was the cheapest alternative available No, indeed It was because acetylene was the safest, the healthfulest, the

cleanest the most efficient light known to man—a conclusion arrived at we were told after exhaustive research by our 7 greatest xperts So those who were at the Club in those early days struggled to prick out plugged up acetylene burners waited for leaking gas to blow them all up and swore at the 7 xperts! When a few years later the Club finally installed electricity acetylene was quickly quietly and completely forgotten

Dewey s passion for saving time has already been referred to It was a passion that had for him far more than an economic basis wasted time was actually a moral issue Time wasn t merely money it was to him a portion of an all too short life in which so much more for the betterment of mankind had to be accomplished than one could possibly achieve at best He developed in Mrs Dewey this same hounding idea and early in their married life they drafted a whole series of formal written agreements with each other providing jointly and severally for the employment of their respective allotments of time to the best advantage

With Dewey this passionate urge to economize time cropped up in all sorts of unexpected places It was what lay at the bottom of his interest in spelling and metric reform It started him off on his lifelong interest in shorthand It made him devise for those who could not read his shorthand a long list of breves or artificially abbreviated forms for the commonest words (such as e for the and qu for quite) Generally these

"brieves" were readable, even by the uninitiated It made him, in citing figures, always use numerals in place of their spelled-out words It made him continuously preach classification, simplification, standardization Why? Because these things all *saved time*

Sometimes his standardizations went too far for him to keep up with them himself—much to the quiet amusement of those who worked with him As a matter of fact Dewey never was a very good exemplar of his own precepts, and only too often his own desk was an inchoate mass of materials in process As Berne A Pyrke, then Commissioner of the State Department of Agriculture, once wrote "We are living in an age when there is a tendency for human beings, like commodities, to become standardized Dr Dewey offered stern resistance to the standardization process He had as strongly marked a personality as any person of my acquaintance"

Dewey would have been able to be more efficient if he had not taken on so much more than any one man could possibly accomplish He delegated when he thought he could, but some things he was reluctant to entrust to anyone else, as a result, his work was habitually in arrears The chief job of May Seymour, his private secretary for many years, was to break through the log jams of promises that were continually piling up to overwhelm him And Mary Emogene Hazeltine gives the following example of the difficulties under which all his co-workers labored in trying to meet the "dead line" dates that came up

When the A L A met in Lakewood on Chautauqua in 1898 I was the local chairman of the Committee on Arrangements I found it almost impossible to get any word from Mr Dewey secretary of the A L A at the time It came to the point where the local com mittee actually had to know certain things for the sake of local arrangements I sent him an important letter special delivery and followed it by a telegram asking immediate reply to special delivery letter just mailed After that he was very prompt with his answers

Members of his staff recall one amusing incident When the Efficiency Society was formed Dewey was of course one of its most prominent and energetic mem bers One day during the first World War when Dewey was deep in special Society committee work for the pro motion of efficiency methods in government offices another very prominent member of his committee ar rived at the Club unexpectedly to confer with him Dewey cast one glance around his office and for once in his life realized that it presented a picture of com plete disorder He thereupon had every loose paper in the room hurriedly swept into a huge clothes hamper which was in turn hidden in a nearby closet When the distinguished visitor walked in a moment or so later the office presented a fine impression of clean cut effi ciency—but it took the Dewey secretarial staff a week to straighten out the contents of that hamper!

His personal kindnesses have been referred to To young people especially to those who were trying to get into librarianship or to keep on with it they were

region He never advertised what he did, and no one will ever know how many he helped, not only with friendly encouragement, but with actual cash Pressed for money though he generally was, he was never so pressed as not to have the money necessary to help out some youngster who really needed something When he was teaching at Bernhard's Bay he bought, out of his own pocket, fifty new spelling books for his pupils At this time his salary was three dollars a day

Pressed for time, too, though he always was, he was never so pressed that he could not give it freely when ambitious young folk wanted his help Under the law all Regents certificates were supposed to be "signed" by the secretary of the Board Each year there were tens of thousands of them, prior to Dewey they had all, as a matter of course, received a rubber-stamped signature But not from him "If a child has worked for years for a scholastic honor," he argued, "the least I can do is to take a half minute to sign his certificate" And sign them personally he did—he, the great time-saver!—nearly 300,000 of them in his eleven years

Edith Rowley, later for many years librarian of Allegheny College, but long, in summer, an executive employee at the Club, wrote

One thing was so repeatedly verified as to be unchallenged He had an unvarying sympathy for the workers on the Club payroll and a desire to have them work under the best conditions possible In all the time I was in charge of a department containing hundreds of help-

ers over a long period of time I never knew of a valid claim or a reasonable request that would make for health comfort or happiness of the group to be refused He was always generous

He was as generous with his home as with his time and his money Every Albany student was a frequent and welcome visitor there Nor was this cordiality a pose he liked young people shared their interests and enthusiasms honestly enjoyed doing helpful things for them Even now scores of present day librarians remember Melvil Dewey not as the leader of their profession but with deep personal affection because of the aid he gave them when help meant much

No whatever were Melvil Deweys personal faults love of money was not one From his Amherst days when he taught scores of his fellow students shorthand free of charge simply because he thought it would be useful to them through his later life when though he had become rich he continued to live as simply as ever down to the end when he finally turned his entire estate over to a philanthropic foundation he paid little attention to personal reward His career at Boston—doing work for nothing for three reform organizations and getting heavily in debt for bare living expenses—was typical At Columbia and Albany alike he received no compensation for his work as Director of the Library School It was to promote the reforms in which he so ardently believed that he could beg and often did that he could squirm and worm and contrive and often did that he

could skate on thin ice, financially, and do almost everything but steal

His thriftiness was ingrained He came of a relatively poor family As a youth he practiced the severest economy—simply because he had to When he went to Amherst he resolved to earn all his college expenses, and he almost did He kept careful accounts with himself all through his school and college years In them we find such items as "tape for clothes, 5 cents," "balance on hand, 10 cents," "loan from W S Biscoe, 70 cents," "carrying coal, 50 cents," "sale of broom, 13 cents" He records "I walked over to Northampton from 8 to 10 in the morning, taking it easily and saving 75c—and getting some good exercise" These almost penurious habits stuck with him all his life Fontaine Fox's "Old String Saver" had nothing on him He used to save every scrap of writing paper, even opening up used envelopes in order to utilize their insides! Yet, as his enterprises enlarged, he would, without hesitation, plunge into commitments involving hundreds of thousands of dollars on the most tenuous of shoestrings!

His indifference to personal acclaim has already been noted Those who denied its existence simply did not really know the man For the things he was fighting for he did seek publicity in every possible way, and in every possible direction, and he was always so aggressive about getting publicity for *them* that he could not help but get some for himself But this personal publicity was indirect and unintentional Equally unintentional

was the exercise of his own personal magnetism Yet this was so real a force that just as where MacGregor sat was the head of the table so wherever Dewey was he became almost automatically the center of discussion and the focus of interest

He had a ready wit was a good conversationalist and when occasion demanded a fluent speaker The only occasions however that seemed to him to demand fluent speech were those in which he was endeavoring to get something concrete accomplished He had no use for airy persiflage for graceful but meaningless tribute for the purely conventional occasional address In debate he was a formidable antagonist He could marshal enough convincing argument to wear down all ordinary opposition But if he found the direct opposition insurmountable his mind was so alert that he could promptly twist his whole line of approach so that his opponents might be dismayed to find themselves being attacked as it were from the rear they would be suddenly disconcerted to hear him using *their* arguments to prove *his* case Of course this particular sort of argumentative ability sometimes whips back His political opponents at Albany accused him of being as slippery as an eel Don t get into an argument with him said one of the keenest of them you may carry away the idea that you have won it but when the smoke clears away you ll find that though you won the argument he has gotten what he was after

This strength of his in argumentative debate was

attested many times St Clair McKelway, a member of the Board of Regents, confessed that Dewey was able to get the unanimous approval of the Board to one course of action, and then, six months later, when he had changed his mind, was able to get them to reverse themselves with the same unanimity Time and again, during the days of the Club's expansion, banking or creditor groups met with him, determined, after prior conference and careful agreement among themselves, *this* time to bell the cat (i e, to hold him down to a more conservative course of Club development) Every time, when these conferences finally broke up, Dewey had succeeded in convincing them all that the thing he wanted to do was exactly the right, wise, conservative and desirable thing to do Many elements contributed to his argumentative ability, but the chief one was always his enthusiasm This was unquenchable and usually irresistible

Nor was this enthusiasm a matter of verbal trickery or oratorical pyrotechnics It convinced because it was genuine Once Dewey had convinced himself that something ought to be done, he fought to get it done with every weapon in his mental armory When a moral issue—or what he thought was a moral issue—was at stake, he became completely blinded to all distinctions of what was normally justifiable or unjustifiable Call this casuistry Call it what you like It wasn't merely that the end justified the means With him rationalization went much farther than that with him, whatever the means, it became the right and honest thing to do It was this extreme

intensity of conviction this utter inability to see any side of an argument except his own that made him such a dangerous opponent Walter Biscoe once said of him If Melvil Dewey did not agree with any one he did not hesitate to say so He was willing and anxious to learn from the opinions and discussions of others If however a principle was involved he would not yield a point

In a letter to George William Curtis written March 29 1892 Dewey himself said The price of achieving great results is often that we make some enemies whose personal notions must be over ridden This is an extremely revealing statement Of such stuff as Dewey implies in this statement are martyrs made And prophets And fanatics And he had in his own make up a good deal of all three But after all it is the prophets and martyrs and fanatics who shake our sodden world and make it move a tiny bit farther along some upward path

In Dewey the will to achieve was so strong that he often failed to weigh justly the forces in opposition Sometimes it seemed as though he deliberately refused to admit that any opposition existed! Perhaps this was courage of a very high order Perhaps it was another phase of his amazing ability to deceive himself Yet however hard he fought his animosity was never personal There was nothing venomous or spiteful about it All that he wanted was to secure his opponent s acquiescence he had not the slightest interest in hurting or humiliating him Of this amazing lack of personal bias

there is no better example than the letter which he wrote President Taylor of Vassar on February 13, 1904, regarding Dr Draper's personal qualifications Remember that he is writing of a man threatening to undo him and all his work, and writing at a time when his feud with him was at its height

> My confidence is largely dependent on Draper's personality You know I scrapped with him when he was here, was never considered his personal or official ally, but by many was supposed to be his educational rival I feel therefore that I am in a position where no one will accuse my judgment of being warped in his favor I have canvassed the country repeatedly and am forced every time to the conclusion that his very unusual experience, his strength, his reputation, the confidence of legislature and people in his educational work, which he has to an unusual degree, make him the very best man in the United States to come here at this time It is a crime to have this friction continue longer and a discredit to us all

It was just because he was so paradoxical that Dewey's enemies could not understand him Because they could not appreciate the peculiar quality of his idealism, they called it a pose Because they were unable to understand such a letter as the Draper letter above, because they could not understand how he could apparently wish to be the personal friend of men on whose ideas he was waging unrelenting war, they accused him of insincerity Because his continued iteration of a few great basic principles of librarianship came in time to sound somewhat bromidic, they overlooked the fact that he was the

one who had made them basic by means of the very itera tion of which they complained

Dewey s eager spirit craved much but never serenity To create something worthwhile to achieve success in some venture for human betterment and having achieved it to begin a new venture—to him *this* was the breath of life In a letter from Florida dated December 10 1931 he quoted approvingly the conclusion of De Stael that it is the summit of human happiness to feel each night that one has made some progress toward a worthy ideal And he added Forty years ago [Mrs Dewey and I] counted fifteen local state or national organizations or movements of which the chief load was on me in all these the real work has been done by unusually loyal co-workers My share has been like a gadfly to prod others into action The world has always given me more than my share of the credit

Did Dewey ever regret any of his fights? Did he ever wish he had made fewer enemies? Probably yes Yet so far as he was concerned his conscience was clear In what he thought at the time he dictated it was his last message a message addressed to my associates in many good causes he said

As I look back over the long years I can recall no one I ever intentionally wronged or of whom I should now ask forgiveness Doubtless I have made many mistakes but according to my light I have tried to do right and so if my race is run I can go down into the last river serene clear-eyed and unafraid

Those who know Dewey best believe he wrote that paragraph with the most absolute sincerity To believe that whatever one does is right, is, obviously, too convenient a philosophy of life to be easily credible But to believe is not at all the same thing as to pretend to believe Many a clever man has fooled the world, but very few men of real intelligence have ever been able completely to fool themselves Dewey undoubtedly had at times this particular ability At times it was a helpful shield, at times it led him astray In it lies, I think, the explanation of some things in his life that would otherwise be enigmas

XIV

THE END

ON AUGUST 3 1902 Annie Dewey died For forty four years she had given her husband unswervingly loyal support in all his interests and undertakings A keenly intel lectual woman in her own right she nevertheless felt that his welfare and work were so much more important than her s that they should come first and gladly she so placed them Because she believed sincerely and intensely in him and in his ability her moral and mental support were something on which he came to lean perhaps more than he himself suspected

Yet Mrs Dewey was herself a pioneer in educational work and her interest in and sympathy with her hus band s many activities were therefore neither forced nor fortuitous Although she had come to Wellesley a young girl just out of college and of course entirely without either library training or experience she was conducting the library there with marked success when she left it to be married Many years later at Lake Placid she found a special niche of endeavor of her own in domestic science a then just developing professional field for women She and Melvil had become acquainted with Mrs Ellen H Richards one of the first great leaders in

the new field With her enthusiastic cooperation and advice, the first Lake Placid Conference on Home Economics was held at the Club in 1899 These Lake Placid Conferences continued annually for ten years, helped financially and otherwise by Mrs Dewey Eventually they grew into the American Home Economics Association, now a large and influential national organization Of the original Conferences Mrs Dewey was for many years president She had therefore every right to take pride in the flowering of her own grain of mustard seed

The family life of the Deweys was uneventful As a family the Deweys had always been philoprogenetive, and Melvil is on record as having hoped for a large family of his own In this he was disappointed He had but one child, a son, Godfrey, born September 3, 1887 Godfrey inherited his father's interest in shorthand, and is now recognized as a world authority on its philological and scientific backgrounds

Mrs Dewey's last years were shadowed by illness and by blindness, but she accepted both uncomplainingly, learning—when past seventy—to read and to typewrite by touch so that she might still carry on [1] The urge for service was as strong as ever "We shall have to celebrate our anniversary far apart this year," she wrote Dewey, shortly before she died " I am feeling stronger If I could only do more real good work Love, and heaps of it"

[1]It is interesting to note that her sister, Lydia B Godfrey, a member of the second class of the Columbia Library School, and her successor as librarian at Wellesley, also met, at seventy, the same affliction, and met it with the same quiet Godfrey courage

Melvil was at Chautauqua at a committee meeting when she wrote him again on July 31st 1922

DEAREST

The Gallia chorus was given last evening very accept ably doing Harry much credit Several spoke of it and said it was a pity Mr Dewey was not here for it Both the solos were well done There was a big crowd and Oh how we do need the Agora! People sat on the stairs and everywhere they could hang on by their eyelids

To her typewritten letter she added this pathetic post script in the shorthand they both used It is lonesome without you Come home She passed away in her sleep three days later with Mr Dewey still away

Two years later he married again His second wife Mrs Emily McKay Beal, had come to the Club some years before to assist in its administrative detail A widow a warm friend of the first Mrs Dewey a welcome member for years of The Cedars (the Lake Placid home of the Deweys) household a devoted believer in Melvil s lifework the closer tie of marriage was a natural development of their situation

Meantime in the course of years several other women who in entirely different ways had meant much to him had died We have already referred to the fact that Melvil Dewey found women more satisfactory to work with than men All his life a group of them as secre taries as teachers in the Library School as co workers in

On the other hand it is perhaps noteworthy that the Festschrift volume was masculine in its origin and predominantly masculine in authorship

many causes, as friends, had been very close to him The list of them is too long to do more here than cite a few names, collectively, however, they played a significant part in his personal development, and in making possible the realization of many of his dreams Florence Woodworth (unlike the rest, fortunately still with us), for thirty-three years the Assistant to the Director of the Library School, known and beloved by hundreds of students, May Seymour, for many years Dewey's private secretary, his loyal aide in all his varied activities, Katharine L Sharp, long head of the University of Illinois Library School and later for several years a vice-president of the Lake Placid Club, Dorkas Fellows, Miss Seymour's successor in Decimal Classification revision, the "Wellesley Half Dozen," already referred to, Margaret Miller, for many years a member of his personal staff, Mary Eileen Ahern, for thirty-six years editor of *Public Libraries,* Ada Alice Jones, long a member of the Library School staff, Theresa Elmendorf, head of the Buffalo Public Library, and many others The power of his personality was so great that all who worked with him were devoted to him His work was their work True to the educational theory that he had outlined as a lad of seventeen, he, through them and many others, multiplied himself manifold

In February, 1927, Dewey received warning that the end of a long and hotly contested race was approaching The youngster, who in his teens had been thought doomed to an early death, was now seventy-six All his

life afflicted by minor ailments he had as yet known few serious ones But this year—he was at the Florida Lake Placid Club at the time—he had a shock not so serious a one as at first appeared but still a warning

In the statement that he dictated at this time a statement already quoted from he said

> I am profoundly grateful that I have had seventy five years with so much of the supreme joy of hard work so little pain and so many opportunities to help make a better world The rich legacy I leave you is the chance to carry to fruition these movements we have started Carry on—Don t give up the ship! The right thing always succeeds in the end
>
> I am grateful for the trust and affection which has made my work easier and my years happier I wish that my ashes may rest in the altar of the Club Chapel in the midst of what I have loved so well Let there be no monument except the Club itself

He recovered from this attack however and carried on for four years more On December 10 1931 came his eightieth birthday Five years before in 19 6 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary meeting of the American Library Association at Philadelphia Dewey had been invited to be the guest of honor It had been his first A L A convention in many years Although he had said little there was no doubt that the gratitude and respect shown him there had warmed his heart greatly Some of his personal enemies had died Others had felt it was time to forget Now on the occasion of his eightieth birthday a good many more hatchets were buried and

a large part of the library profession joined in a spontaneous tribute to the man who was, in a very real sense, its creator He was deeply moved by the dozens of congratulatory letters and telegrams that he received

Two weeks later, on the day after Christmas, he died, of a cerebral hemorrhage His body was cremated and his ashes deposited, as he had wished, in the crypt under the altar of the beautiful Lake Placid Club chapel, beside those of Annie Dewey and two little grandsons

As the writer remarked in the Preface, he does not feel that it is within the province of such a slender volume as this to make any formal appraisal of the meaning of Melvil Dewey's life, or of his place in the development of the library profession Dorothy Canfield Fisher once wrote to him "I would like to write something about you personally and your brain, and what it has done to our generation and will do to the next There are so few originating brains in any generation that they ought to be chronicled"

Another has phrased the essential quality of Dewey's contribution to library development far better than the writer could "He forgot himself When he spoke, his imperfections were lost in the glow of his enthusiasm When he organized, the fire of his faith burned away all obstacles He abandoned himself utterly to his task, and the task molded him into greatness"[3]

[3]Bruce Barton "What Makes Men Great" 1926 p 205

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THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

The American Library Association, established in 1876, is an organization of libraries, librarians, library trustees and others interested in the responsibilities of libraries in the educational, social and cultural needs of society It is affiliated with more than fifty other library associations in this country and abroad It works closely with many organizations concerned with education, recreation, research, and public service Its activities are carried on by a headquarters staff, voluntary boards and committees, and by divisions, sections, and round tables, all interested in various aspects or types of library service Its program includes information and advisory services, personnel service, field work, annual and midwinter conferences, and the publication—not for profit—of numerous professional books, pamphlets and periodicals